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Saturday, January 12, 2008

Nancy Szerlag: Gardening

Color trends change, 'green' here to stay



The what's in, what's out, what's hot and what's not, season is here. Fortunately, gardeners -- even the trendy types -- don't get heavy into what's trendy when it comes to digging in the dirt. Gardeners find it almost impossible to throw away a living plant regardless of its condition.

But for those who wish to be trendsetters in the garden, I checked out the Pantone color report for 2008, www.pantone.com, and the hot color is blue -- iris blue to be exact. It is beautifully balanced deep blue-purple, combining the stable and calming aspects of blue with the mystical and spiritual qualities of purple. The Pantone people suggest it be artfully combined with deeper plums, red-browns, yellow-greens, grapes and grays. Great for the living room but I'd drop the red-browns and use pink in the garden.

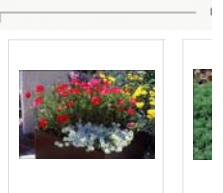
But since blue has always been the Holy Grail for gardeners, we can hardly call iris blue or any other shade a hot trend.

But small space gardening is a big trend, thanks to lack of time and big footprint construction, and containers are the perfect solution. The "if it grows, it goes" style of planting -- mixing annuals, perennials, tropical and shrubs has moved from trendy to classic. These combination plantings need lots of room to grow, so large containers will soon become permanent elements in the design of the garden. Check out the Campania International Web site, www.campaniainternational.com, for a huge selection of fabulous containers, along with fountains and statuary. From classic to mod, there is something there for everyone.

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ardeners will be looking to replace synthetic chemicals with environmentally friendly organic products. Some homeowners will begin experimenting with ground covers, no-mow lawns and decorative grasses in hopes of downsizing their thirsty, chemical-hungry turf. Terra Nova Nurseries' hot new ground cover Ajuga "Toffee Chip" with its sage and cream variegated leaves is a great place to start.

Now that the organic food movement has gone mainstream, this season we should see more and more homeowners integrating veggies into the gardens. Plant patio tomatoes and cucumbers surrounded with a variety of lettuces and you have a salad in a pot. Add chives and basil for herbal

clippings.

When it comes to plants, bold leaves, in size and color, continue to steal the show this year. One of the newest hotties is the dynamic Cardoon *Cynara cardunculus*, a relative of the artichoke. Check it and other great container combinations on White Flower Farm's Web site, www.whiteflowerfarm.com. I'm on the lookout for Terra Nova's variegated leaf *Acanthus mollis* "Tasmanian Angel." It's only hardy to zone 7 but can probably be over-

wintered indoors.

Nancy Szerlag is a master gardener and Metro Detroit freelance writer. Her column appears Saturdays in Homestyle. E-mail her at Szerlag @earthlink.net. You can also read her previous columns at detnews.com/homestyle/. For more gardening tips check out her blog at www.gardeneryardener.blogspot.com.

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