

Ornamental grasses add color, variety during winter

By Liz Douville
For WesCom News Service

Fall and winter are when ornamental grasses come into their own. They don't have to compete with withering purple petunias or a half dozen other annuals past their prime. The spotlight is finally on them, and they should have our full attention.

Ornamental grasses provide winter beauty, especially if covered with frost or with the sun streaming through the foliage and seed heads. They add movement and sound and provide a significant vertical presence to a flat winter landscape. The grasses offer protection for overwintering insect egg masses, larvae and adult insects. It's a perfect place to call home for beneficial insects. The eggs can hatch and their larvae can grow into their adult selves.

Birds use standing grasses as sources for seeds and for winter protection. After a decline over the past two years, a native bush in my front yard has met its demise. The bush has been a safe haven for quail even in winter with its bare low branches. It is presently an eyesore and needs to come out. Now I'm



Dean Guernsey /WesCom News Service

Ornamental grasses can add late-season interest with their wheat-like grain heads.

debating if I should plant the same variety of bush, choose something different that has early spring blooms for bees or plant an ornamental grass.

I am leaning toward a native bush with early season bee attraction that will fill the limited space. According to the articles I have been reading, from a design point, more than one stand of grass should be used combined with flowering perennials and shrubs to create the dra-

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matic effect the ornamental grasses should command. I am not dismissing an ornamental grass planting, but more thought needs to go into

the project to get the most visual impact of the planting. Grasses can grow in poorer soils better than many other garden plants and require little effort to maintain. Grasses generally grow best in three to five hours of direct sun. In shade, they may not bloom, become weak with a tendency to fall over and may not develop peak fall color. Grasses fall into two categories: cool season and warm

season. Cool-season grasses are not cut back. In the spring these grasses should be combed out vigorously, removing the brown and dead foliage to allow for the new spring growth. Wear gloves, as the foliage may be sharp enough to injure the hands. Some of the most popular cool-season grasses include fescues, blue oat grass and tufted hair grass. If they are not watered during drought, they tend to go dormant, resulting in brown foliage. Warm-season grasses are cut back to 4 to 6 inches in the spring to remove the brown foliage and allow space for new spring growth. These grasses tend to remain looking good even when temperatures are high and drought conditions may prevail. Some of the most popular warm-season grasses in Central Oregon are little bluestem, Karl Foerster feather reed grass, fountain grass, maiden hair grass and switch grass. Many gardeners object to the growth habit of some of the ornamental grasses. Sometimes our limited growing season can have its advantages. In Central and Eastern Oregon, some seeds will not ripen and reseed in

our short growing season. There are also sterile seed varieties that have been developed. My flower containers on the front steps are finished for the season. I am going to do some experimenting and plant an ornamental grass, maybe along with some dried materials to make it eye-catching. It's a good excuse to visit the local garden centers.



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Tricks to manage post-Halloween treats

By Barbara Quinn
The Monterey County Herald

Halloween may be over but, the treats linger on. In terms of nutrition, how we handle this candy-filled holiday is a sticky topic, according to registered dietitian and family therapist Ellyn Satter. On one hand, we don't want to encourage our kids to eat sugar-loaded nutrient-

deficient foods. But we also don't want a child to sneak or hide food because they sense our disapproval. We've all seen unfortunate examples of well-intentioned parents who overly restrict a child's intake. It's a perfect set-up for a lifelong pattern of disordered eating. And we've seen children raised on a steady diet of junk foods who

don't fare so well either. Satter suggests a more balanced approach. "Your child will learn to manage sweets and to keep them in proportion to the other food he eats if you matter-of-factly include them in family meals and snacks," she says. Satter suggests we use this holiday as an opportunity to

teach children how to manage their stash of goodies. That means we try not to interfere too much. "The key phrase in my candy advice is relegate it to meal- and snack-time. Structure is key. (Regular meal times and sit-down snacks.) Retain your leadership role in choosing the rest of the food that goes on the table."

SAUCE

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I like crushed because I think it's the closest to sauce consistency. (I like whole, canned Italian tomatoes, too, but, then I have to chop them or whirl them in the food processor like some kind of serial killer. And that's 87 seconds I may never get back.) Grab a 28-ouncer. Next, go to the spice section, and pick up a small container of Italian seasoning. When you get home, put on a big pot of water, on full blast. Then empty the can of tomatoes into a small pot and add a tablespoon-ish of the spice mix and a teaspoon of salt. Bring it to a boil, then reduce the heat and let it simmer for as long as it takes for you to make the pasta. That's it. Taste the sauce for salt, then toss it with your pasta

and scrape on some good Parmesan cheese. Nota bene: The real stuff, from Parma, if you can afford it, tastes miles better than the domestic from Wisconsin — no offense, Cheeseheads. Whatever you do, avoid like a talking snake that shelf-stable stuff in the cylindrical containers; it really does taste like actual floor sweepings. Now, look, I know that this seems too easy. Especially considering how Great Aunt Caligulina used to simmer her famous sauce for hours and hours. Well, no offense to Auntie C., but, trust me, this will taste good and, more importantly, not "straight-from-the-accursed-jar." Serve it alongside a grilled chicken breast or a seared pork chop or something similar, and it will taste even better. One more time, here's the formula: Tomato product + flavoring = sauce. Now that

you have that very simple strategy down, let's look at some other ideas:
Sauce 2
Puttanesca-ish. Heat up a cup or so of crushed tomatoes, and stir in a few tablespoons of jarred tapenade along with some crushed red pepper flakes (and minced parsley, if you've got a minute), et voila, a reasonable facsimile of that great Italian sauce puttanesca. You don't even need any other herbs.
Sauce 3
Anchovy and its variations. Here's you: "But, I hate anchovies!" Here's me: "Shut up." They're little fish. Not monsters. Just mince more or less equal parts garlic, anchovy fillets and parsley so you have a little pile on your cutting board about the size of a golf ball or a small mouse or two. Saute

it over medium heat in a tablespoon or so of olive oil or butter for a minute until it starts to brown, then add your 28-ounce can of crushed tomatoes and simmer while your pasta cooks to combine the flavors. Season with salt. Done.
Variation A: Tuna. Follow the anchovy sauce instructions above, and, along with the tomatoes, add a tin of canned tuna. Sounds gross, right? But, trust me: Y-U-M.
Variation B: Clams. As with Variation A, pretend you're going all anchovy garlic. Then, just before you add the tomato, open a can of clams. Pour in the clam water, and boil it down until it's almost gone. (You could do the same with a little white wine, too, you drinky scamp!) Then add the tomatoes and clams, and simmer until your pasta's done. Taste for salt and pepper. Done.

CONNECT

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My friend Faye loved weeds and thought of them as flowers the same as I do. It seems like all through our life we must get used to the loss of people close to us as we gradually are becom-

ing the older generation. There are parts of our lives we share with each other in the form of flowers and plants that can be seen and appreciated by all. Just to see the plant and share it with others evokes memories of friends and times shared. There are other parts of

our lives we share that are ideas expressed over pie and coffee and the memories are brought back by certain fragrances and acts of kindness we encounter. Life is sometimes a garden grown in a web of plants that look like people with smiles and friendship and deeply

philosophical things to say. Gardens are a way to connect us with each other. If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com thanks for reading!

DORY

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I studied the word a bit more. Then I realized that if I took the "pi" out of the word opinion I would be left with an onion (five letters). Most of my opinions are usually considered onions, I thought, so why do I bother to express them? The opinions of those expressed on the newspaper page had seemed quite heartily expressed with feeling and sincerity. I do the same when I express an opinion openly or to myself, I now thought, but often what seems an opinion for something or

someone often turns into a negative against someone or something else so is it wise to express it at all, seeing that onions smell badly after a time even though they served one well at the time? Take the word "pi" in connection with the newspaper industry ... well, back when the paper was put together with hot lead type from Linotype machines and the headlines made from cold type. The cold type was kept alphabetically, mostly, in wooden compartments on a flat surface where the printer could pick up one letter at a time and insert it in the frame to complete the story below with a headline. Now

there were times when a box of type could get accidentally spilled and the letters mixed together. This is when they were called "pi." Then the printer or the printer's devil (helper) had to pick up the letters one by one and insert them back in order in their proper compartment. This was not a fun time and I chose not to be in the hearing vicinity if it happened. I thought about this word "pi" in connection with the original word, opinion, and finally decided I didn't want to be an onion or a pinion so perhaps I should keep my opinions to myself or I might end up spilling newspaper letters into "pi."



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