

ORGANIZATION'S 2019 SUGGESTIONS FOR PERENNIAL, BULB AND EDIBLE

# National Garden Bureau's top picks

By Liz Douville  
For WesCom News Service

The National Garden Bureau, founded in 1920, is a nonprofit organization developed during the World War I era to encourage backyard food growing. During the World War II era, it continued to encourage and support backyard food production with the promotion of Victory Gardens. Each year the bureau selects one annual, one perennial, one bulb and one edible as its "Year of the" selections.

"The plants are chosen because they are popular, easy-to-grow, widely adaptable, genetically diverse and versatile," according to the garden bureau.

Reading through the selections might give you some ideas for selecting plants you haven't tried previously. Here are the picks for 2019:

## Snapdragon

The snapdragon was chosen for its multiple uses in the garden. The plants are aromatic, plus they attract pollinators.

According to the bureau fact sheet, the genus name *antirrhinum* comes from the Greek words *anti*, meaning against, and *rhin*, meaning nose or snout, which describes the shape of the flowers. There are also varieties that have unique double and open flowers. Although treated as an annual because they aren't considered hardy, they have overwintered in my rockery absorbing the warmth and protection. I have decided with the planting this year I am going to utilize an area that is more open and exposed to the weather to make a comparison.

The pollinators that are attracted to the flower include hummingbirds, bumble bees and other larger bees. The flower is not the best honey bee attractor because the flowers are a little heavy for the bees to access.

With fingers crossed for the coming season, I can report that in the past the deer have not been interested in munching. That is supported by the NGB's fact sheet, which also states that rabbits aren't interested in



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the plantings.

Snapdragons can be purchased as plants from your favorite garden center or you could start the seeds indoors. Start the seeds using a seed starting mix six to eight weeks prior to planting outside, which is usually the first week of June (weather permitting). The seeds require light to germinate. Do not cover the seeds with the seeding mix. Germination time is usually 10 to 15 days.

## Salvia nemorosa

Salvias are a perennial in the mint family Lamiaceae and are cousins to *Nepeta* (catmint) and *Monarda* (bee balm). Although there are more than 1,000 species found from tropical forests to high desert, only a few hundred are hardy. The hardier salvias originated from plants found in the wooded elevations of Eurasia. Hardy *Salvia nemorosa* are considered to be care-free. They are a favorite of bees and hummingbirds. Being a member of the mint family, its foliage is not preferred on the dining table of deer and rabbits.

*Salvia* flowers grow best when planted where they will receive a half day of direct sun. *Salvia* prefers soils rich in organic matter so you might think about adding some compost as you plant. *Salvia* plants are fertilized when they emerge from dormancy in the spring and again in early summer.

## Dahlia

I have always held dahlia growers in the highest esteem. It goes back to my childhood and one of the assumptions I had, which was that only the rich ladies grew dahlias. These ladies won the blue ribbons at the annual flower show. They did not weed the garden, plant the corn or shuck the peas.

In reading the fact sheet, I couldn't help but chuckle with an added "if you (ladies) only knew" thought. Ironically, in Spain and parts of Europe, initial breeders of dahlias were more interested in the dahlia as a food source as the blooms weren't considered that noteworthy.

The native dahlia was found in the mountains of Mexico and Guatemala and was referred to as the tree dahlia. The hollow stems of these plants, some growing to over 20 feet, were often used for hauling water or as an actual source of water to traveling hunters. The dahlia is the national flower of Mexico. It is also the official flower of Seattle and San Francisco. Swan Island Dahlias in Canby is the largest and leading dahlia grower in the U.S. Late in August, Swan Island hosts a dahlia festival. Details can be found on its website.

The dahlia tuber resembles a sweet potato. It is planted with the eye up about the same time as you would plant tomato plants. Most dahlias need to be staked. The best

practice is placing the stake prior to planting to avoid damage to roots or the tuber.

## Pumpkin

Central and Eastern Oregon gardeners, do not raise your eyebrows. Yes, it is possible to grow pumpkins. Pumpkins originated in Central America where Native Americans would both roast and consume strips of pumpkin flesh, or dry the skins and weave them into mats. That is one weaving technique I haven't tried. Europeans arriving to the colonies prepared a dish believed to be a precursor of the pumpkin pie. They cut the top off the pumpkin, removed the seeds and filled the inside with milk, spices and honey before baking it over hot ashes.

Pumpkins are easy to grow and can be either direct seeded or started indoors four to six weeks before planting out. Germination time is usually seven to 10 days. Seeds are planted at a depth of 1 inch, and the best germination soil temperature is 70 degrees.

In 2018, 42 pounds of pepitas hybrid pumpkin were grown in the OSU Extension Demonstration Garden and donated to a local food pantry. Pepitas received an All-America Selection award for its culinary and decorative uses. Small sugar, also called New England pie, is known as being the best pie pumpkins. It has also been productive in Central Oregon.



Terri Colby/Chicago Tribune-TNS

The two dark spots at the base of this monarch butterfly's wings indicate that this one is a male.

## BUTTERFLIES

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Larvae hatching from eggs laid on milkweed by the migrating females recolonize the southern U.S. These larvae mature and metamorphose into the familiar butterflies and the cycle repeats. Subsequent generations gradually move northward and spread through the U.S. and Canada to the Rockies.

Summer generations of monarchs have a lifespan of two to six weeks, depending on temperature and supply of nectar. Survival of summer monarchs declines when temps exceed 95 degrees.

Monarchs that emerge as butterflies from their chrysalides in late summer and early fall differ in behavior from those emerging earlier in the season.

Late-season adults do not mate and instead prepare for an arduous trip south for the winter. They tend to gradually move in a southerly direction and at night they are often seen clustering, an activity that is not done earlier in the season.

Since they are preparing for a long migratory flight, late-season nectar providers are very important for energy resources. In our garden, we have tried to incorporate plants that bloom late in the season such as showy goldenrod, zinnia, tithonia, asters, and garlic chives.

To winter successfully, the monarchs need protection. They need trees to cluster on, an undergrowth of shrubs for protection in case they lose their hold on the trees above and are too cold to fly back up, temps that are cool but not freezing so their metabolism is slowed.

Protection from wind and snow plus fog and clouds for moisture. All of these conditions occur in a very small area in central Mexico on steep, southwest-facing slopes. These sites were only discovered in 1975. Even though scientists knew for almost a century that monarchs migrated somewhere, but they did not know where.

One of the most amazing aspects of the whole migration is the fact that the butterflies making the trip the next fall are three or four generations removed from those making the spring trip north. Fall migrants are able to find the Mexican overwintering sites without any previous experience, and example of navigational expertise that remains one of nature's unsolved mysteries.

If you have garden questions or comments, please write: greengardencolumn@yahoo.com Thanks for reading!

## DORY

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Somehow I never grew tired of the eagerness to get to the office and proceed with the work I had taken home with me the night before.

Maybe it was the clacking of manual typewriters, the jangling of telephones, the hustle of the crew coming and going from the office. Maybe it was the sharing of news stories currently underway or maybe it was the musical sound of the Linotype machines responding to the nimble and correctly placed fingers of their operators as column after column showed up in print from cases filled and locked-in with cold lead type headlines, all as a result of the copy provided by the reporters and locked-in on the big old noisy press.

Later at The Observer we were slowly moving along into the electronic-age but we didn't know it then. We just knew something exciting was about to happen in printing a single page from pasted articles. I followed it with my own publication the Blue Mountain Times historical quarterly and learned the process of cutting and pasting printed articles on the dummy sheet as to where they would appear when the total page was printed on the press.

Maybe it was, and still is, something born inside that responds to certain stimuli that requires an answer.

Maybe there is no answer or reason as to "Why?"

It is just there like a human, animal, or fowl response to the clang of the fire truck or the police siren or the fallen snow heralding the coming spring. They must respond to its call.

Likewise, the news must be gathered and delivered as quickly as possible by reputable newspapers or other media, to inform, to instruct, to amuse, to question, to provoke the reader into action along with providing knowledge to the general public.

Newsrooms and reporters as well as others dedicated to the purpose of printing out the newspaper or other publications are still there in other buildings, in other locations. The two buildings with which I had become the most acquainted and built up the strongest response are now gone. They became rubble. I can not go back other than in memory to visit these quarters in which I spent my special time and I grieve their passing just as I do a number of the ones with whom I worked or have lost through distance or death. It never can be recaptured regardless of my trying, for I have aged and life has changed on all quarters.

The lack of the typical newsroom with its audible typewriters, ringing telephones, excitement-sharing news reports underway, and the camaraderie of those involved haunts me yet in

the solitude of my home office and email-computer connection to the printing of my words in The Observer and the Baker City Herald and being unable to share in the anxiety or pleasure of other workers still involved in providing the same service to the public. They are still there, undoubtedly feeling the same feelings as I and will remember how it was for them when time has passed them by as well as the way things are done.

It's called Progress, I believe, but it leaves me behind as I believe it will do to each generation ... and it hurts even while it must be done.

As for currently, in spite of The Observer and the Herald facing trying times ahead through no fault of their own, I expect to see their smiling faces of expectation because they are part of the survival and will be there, now with the help of the East Oregonian in Pendleton, for the folks who like to hold the newspaper in their hands to read it, to clip items from it, to reread it later, to wait for its delivery. It's their newspaper and they want it even when it's to criticize it, to look at the obituaries, to see what's happening in town, because it's a habit, because they aren't connected to electronics, because it's part of their lifeline. Long live the paper-printed newspaper! Long live the birds who bring news of approaching spring!

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