

THE DOG DAYS OF SUMMER

By Sally Hanrahan

It's finally that time of year when you can sit on the patio, sip lemonade and enjoy the fruits of your labor. You're finally relaxing in the oasis you created, getting away from it all! However, as you look around, you notice that your landscape could use more color. Fear not; you can add some pizzazz to your landscape -- even during the dog days of summer.

Annuals:

Colorful hanging baskets can spruce up a patio or entrance way; purchase one pre-made or create your own. You can also create a handsome container using a frost free pot planted with annuals, which can be moved to different locations to add the most interest; in the fall, plant with evergreens for winter interest. Plant annuals between your spent perennials and shrubs, especially in the shade where brighter colors attract the eye.

Perennials:

Add flowering perennials like 'Stella' daylilies that bloom twice. 'Autumn Joy' sedum start blooming now and into the late fall. Pair some black eyed susan, with grasses which provide three seasons of interest. Hostas love shade and come in a variety of greens and creams, flowers and different textures. Bright red crocosmia, lavender, Russian sage, asters, and cone flowers are a few that will add color during those dog days.

Shrubs:

Rose of Sharon, potentilla, butterfly bush, hydrangeas (several varieties) and many spiraea bloom now and into the end of August. Plant burning bush along with 'Tiger Eye' sumac for fall color -- it also provides beautiful yellow/orange color in summer.

Trees:

Maples add great fall color as do the scarlet oak and honeylocust. Ornamental pear will turn a beautiful russet color deep into November. Evergreens add winter interest and make a great perennial backdrop.

Lighting:

If you spend time sitting on your patio during our hot summer nights, consider adding subtle uplighting to accentuate the branching of your trees and place them strategically around the yard to highlight water features, a focal point or walkways.

Water Features:

Nothing soothes the spirit on a hot day like the sounds of moving water – so adding a self-contained water feature or even a water pot planted with water plants will add pizzazz to any landscape.

So while you're finishing your lemonade, identify an area or two that could use some zing, then visit your local garden center to find advice, plants and products that will take your landscape to the next level of enjoyment.