Return

FROM DEC 2002

I have been asked to restart the monthly columns on gardening that I have written on and off for many years.

I thought [that] in what really is an off month for gardeners, I would restate what my garden philosophy is. I believe in planting much closer together than most experts recommend, in using a high proportion of climbing and naturalizing plants, these would include bulbs and self-sowing annuals, forget-me-nots and violas for example. Plants with a long season of bloom or those that repeat whose foliage stays looking good from spring to fall are a must. I try to make room for something unusual that I have not grown before every year. I only use feeding mulches, leaf mold or cow manure from Snow’s Farm in Monroe; pine needles discourage slugs around hostas and primroses. I use no pesticides or herbicides and my yard is a National Wildlife Certified Backyard.

The kind of plant I look for and new to me this summer was Geranium ‘Ann Folkard’. With a graceful wandering habit and bright yellow foliage I had bloom from early summer to fall, the magenta flower with black eye climbed into a nearby Buddleia ‘Lochinch’, another long bloomer with silvery foliage and light mauve panicles, through peony foliage and along the ground in a pleasant meandering way. It does not self-sow like some geraniums and will do well in sun or part shade.

Another new plant I really liked was Heuchera ‘Amber Wave’. We all know the purple foliaged Heucheras, my favorite is ‘Purple Petticoats’ but this one has the most lovely golden leaves, no two are quite the same, it met up with a yellow Carex in a bit of shade and a small yellow hosta and gave me pleasure all summer. Its bloom would not be important as you are using it as a foliage plant.

My third favorite was Calamintha nepeta, it does not do much early in the year but about midsummer it gets going with it’s tiny blue flowers, a frenzy of bees surround it. It’s foliage is silvery and aromatic and I found it made a good partner for Caryopteris covering up their ugly stems, it grows to about 15 inches and was still blooming with the fall asters.

As those of you who have followed my likes and dislikes may remember I order many of my perennials and shrubs from mail order nurseries around the country. I will willingly share my list with any of you who want to go this route... Glad to be back.

Below: 1 to r. Buddleia ‘Lochinch’, and Calamintha nepeta both are among the most outstanding plants for the late-summer and fall garden. For butterflies and bees too.

Noted for its exceptionally long flowering period and spreading habit, award-winning Geranium ‘Ann Folkard’ (Cranesbill) is quite eye-catching with its profusion of large, magenta-pink cup-shaped flowers with black star-shaped centers, rising atop mounds of deeply cut, bright golden chartreuse leaves.

From above: Heuchera ‘Amber Wave’ with its multi-colored leaf and below is Heuchera ‘Purple Petticoats’.