

Fall flowers offer distinctive beauty

By Ginny Gregory

What is beauty? This totally subjective question keeps defying definition.

It is a question I often ask when discussing what plants clients want in their gardens. We each see through our own 'beauty' lens. Beauty is defined by so many elements. Even my least favorite plant can be seen as elegant in the proper setting.

I am drawn to structure first. I used to think it was color that was my lure, but I think structure and texture are what really send me over the edge.

As I write the *Muhlenbergia* is catching the heavy morning dew back light with the day's first ray of sun like a ballerina twinkling under the stage lights. The pink form is arched and the white form is a taller more vertical grass form. I love the movement of the arching form as well as the musty rose color it offers.

The *Callicarpa dicotima* has that



Pink Muhlygrass, displayed en masse, resembles a cloud of cotton candy.

same arching form on almost elastic wooden branches laden with amethyst berries all along the stem. These two plants play so well together. Behind them I see the chartreuse leaves of the Bengal Tiger canna looming overhead. The form is mighty, and vertical, with coarse bold leaves. This time of year the orange/red bloom is not an issue. My perennial daisy-form mums are part of this frame in the movie. They are blushed pink with a yellow center. They seem to be on tiptoes reaching high bouncing about in and out of the picture. They form shrub like mounds.

Formidable. The rigid rosemary holds the entire action in place. The breeze carries a whiff of that splendid herb and I think immediately of chicken and weddings. I have a scrumptious recipe for rosemary chicken. I can almost taste it. I use rosemary in every bridal bouquet I make for it is historically the plant of remembrance.

The New England Aster is the court jester on stilts. It has a huge leaf rosette that sends up a 6'tall stalk comprised of twenty to twenty five branches of tiny daisy form flowers which as a whole forms a magnificent blossom head. She may be in the back, but she has a special place in my heart. She waits so long to be seen ... the last one on stage washed in lavender. The scenic back drop is all of the forest in its' autumnal attire. The sour woods are my all time loves because of their very irregular form. They usually have at least half of their branches horizontal to nature's floor. The *Viburnum* have tiered outstretched arms of color to

present. The native hollies are all twisted from ice storms long past. I have come to love their dull dark green color over the years. I have lived in my garden and woods for eight years.

The beauty is endless. It is a native and hybridized dance in harmony. The weeds bother me less. The breeze thrills me more. I crave winter and yearn of spring. Fall is my birth season and most favorite. Summer is a time when seasonal growth exceeds all limits. By the end of August I am worn out with it and love starting over with young new plants of Swiss chard and violas ... different forms and colors. What is beauty? The wind through the leaves. The dew on the grasses. The garishly painted mushrooms.

The world through my eyes is filled with unbelievable beauty. It is there for all to enjoy. Happy fall to all.

Ginny Gregory is owner and creative energy behind "Beyond The Pail." Check out www.beyondthepail.net

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