



MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Colorado Master Gardener

Reliable Late Summer Color

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About this time of year, I begin to document for the next gardening season. I list plants I will consider adding and I make notes on annuals and perennials that did particularly well. I also list those perennials that under-performed or did not make a repeat appearance.

Some years ago, I planted Gladiola bulbs. I needed something colorful to fill empty spots. I was not ready to add perennials. By mid-August I was delighted with my decision. The area I planted was filled with about 25 tall stalks of brightly colored flowers in shades of pink, yellow, and purple. A friend noted that the area looked lovely, even if it did remind her of a funeral home. I thought her comment was clever and amusing. And, it certainly did not dissuade me from continuing to plant these bulbs each year.

In general, “Glads” are maintenance free. I plant according to instructions. They are not deer resistant so I have to regularly spray with a deer repellent. They are not cold hardy here and have to be planted each year. At the end of the season, I cut down the stalks and leave the bulbs in the soil. The bulbs readily decompose over the winter months, adding organic matter to my less than ideal soil. The bulbs can be dug and stored indoors during



the winter, then replanted once frost danger is passed. If you think Gladioli are something you want to add to your garden, I recommend you do a bit of Internet research and get all of the details on how to successfully plant this bulb.

My second suggestion for late summer color is Morning Glory. My neighbor has a long front porch (with a southwest exposure). Last summer I visited and was stunned to see the entire railing on the porch covered with Morning Glory flowers. She tells me she soaks the seeds overnight and then sows directly into the soil in late spring. She has used this technique for multiple years and believes the some of the plants are from seeds that dropped in a prior year. I do not have an area that would “do justice” to this lovely plant. So, rather than sow seeds directly into the soil, I add the seeds to my hanging baskets. The vines climb and cascade and look lovely until the first frost.

Morning Glory is a fast-growing annual vine that readily attaches itself to even flimsy structures. The vines produce flowers in a range of colors (blue, pink, purple and bicolor) morning and evening. The flowers attract birds, bees and butterflies. One word of caution – if the seeds are ingested in large quantities they can cause health problems; keep seed packets out of a child’s reach. If the idea of planting Morning Glories next gardening season appeals, do your Internet research to find all applicable details for planting and maintaining this lovely vine.

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. The Help Desk is open at 17 N. Spruce St. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Call 520-7684 or email CSUmg2@elpasoco.com.