

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 10-19-05) Fall Container Gardens © 2005

This is Breast Cancer Awareness Month and in honor of my fellow survivors and their families I'd like to share a poem written by Sara J. Weingartner, two-year survivor and artist of the Amoena "Celebrate Life" Breast Cancer Awareness Pin. The poem is titled "I dream, I hope, I embrace, I am alive." "I celebrate for every day and every night. I embrace love and life, the good and the bad. I live with hope. I will never stop dreaming. I am happy to be alive!" As a ten-year survivor I pray that someday there will be a cure for all cancers.

Are you starting to worry about the long fall months but at the same time lusting after thoughts of spring and summer plantings? This is actually one of my favorite times to get out into the garden. The ground is usually moist enough for ease in popping out weeds getting a head start on weed-free zones for next year.

It's time to haunt all your favorite nurseries and garden centers. Look for woody plants with colorful fall foliage to enjoy for several more weeks. I love to visit nurseries this time of year because the color arrays tempt me enough to sneak a few more plants into my already teeming and crowded garden.

I'm gardening more and more in containers. (See the paragraph above about crowded garden space.) Fall containers aren't nearly as labor intensive as summer plantings – no deadheading and very little watering. Pick up some pansies, mums, ornamental grasses and some cool weather dianthus to tuck here and there. Look for miniature conifers to plant in the center of your containers. Surround the mini-shrubs with decorative winter ground covers trailing over the side of the pot.

Wouldn't it be fun to fill some smaller containers with potting soil and sprinkle some winter wheat or crimson clover onto the soil? Cluster the containers together or trail them up your stairs and they'll be blooming bright green foliage through the winter. Look at a local craft store for those decorative sticks and poke a few into the mini-collection of greenery you've created. You could also sneak some bulbs into the containers before you finish filling them up with potting soil and sprinkling on the cover crop seed. The stems and flowers peeking through the grasses and clover would be quite charming.

Bulbs abound at nurseries, local grocery stores and garden centers. Try your luck with daffodils, snowdrops, hyacinth, scilla and crocus. Try the quick-gardening-method of bulb planting. Dig up a large area in a circle or irregular shape. The size of your patch will depend on how many bulbs purchased. Make the hole three times deeper than the tallest bulb. Stand back and gently scatter bulbs randomly around the space. Turn all bulbs right side up (pointy ends facing up to the sky). Cover over the bulbs, pat the soil down and viola you're done.

Remember to save a few bulbs for container gardening. After the containerized bulbs are finished blooming in late spring plant them into your garden and they'll rebloom for years to come. I like to layer bulbs in pots starting with one or two inches of soil, then the

largest bulbs on the bottom covered by a layer of soil, the medium size bulbs in the middle followed by a layer of soil and the tiniest bulbs near the top covered over with soil. Think of it as a bulb and soil parfait.

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