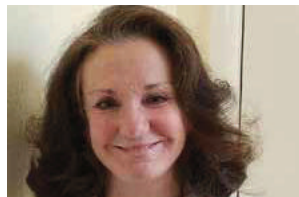


Falling for bright colors

Autumn corms, yellow and purple crocus help add a variety of colors in the backyard garden



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Master Gardener

Question: I love planting daffodils in the winter and having them pop up and cheer me in the summer, almost like a surprise. Any suggestions for a similar feeling and look for fall?

AnsWER: Yes, there are corms, like bulbs, that you can plant in the summer to brighten your fall and winter. Just when your spring blooms are withering and becoming just a memory, these will pop up to brighten your day as well as your garden.

Add blasts of color in your garden with the beautiful colors of the fall-blooming crocus and the autumn crocus. Although they have almost the same name, these are actually two different plants. The colchicum, a relative of the lily, is often called autumn crocus. True crocuses are in the iris family and include the spring variety that we also see as the first sign of spring, the fall blooming crocus and the saffron crocus (for cooking).

There are several reasons for confusing the crocus and the colchicum. Both produce similar looking blooms in the same colors: white, lilac, violet and pink. Also, both the crocus and the colchicum have varieties that bloom in the summer and fall. Both require very similar care. A major difference is that all parts of the colchicum are poisonous if ingested. Deer and other animals steer clear of these.



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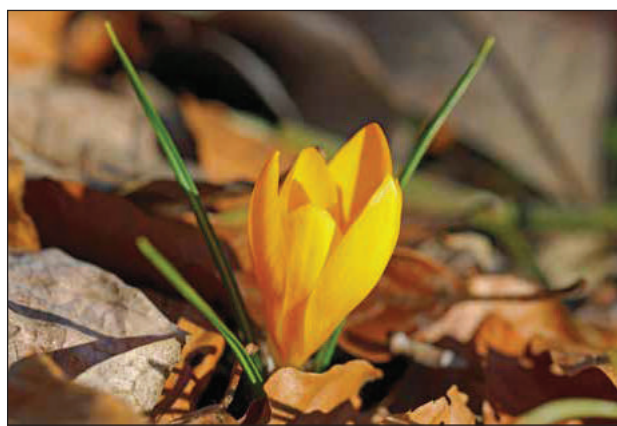
Planting crocus and colchicum for autumn blooms extends the food supply of nectar and pollen for pollinators. The plants are available in August and should be planted as soon as you receive them. And, of course, follow the directions for planting and care that you will receive with the corms.

Like bulbs, they can be left in the ground and will multiply. Divide the foliage every two to three years. Also, just as with bulbs, do not cut the foliage back or separate the corms until the foliage fades.

As both the colchicum and the fall-blooming crocus are low to the ground, you will want

to carefully select where you plant them. You will not get to enjoy them if placed next to shrubs that will hide them.

Colchicum's foliage, when dying back in the spring, is not attractive. Planting them among plants that emerge in spring will camouflage the dying foliage. Excellent complimentary plants to plant near them are dwarf hosta, geraniums and other similar plants. Also, the stems of colchicums tend to be weak, but planting a ground-cover over them will help support the stems when they come up and keeps them off of the ground. This practice can also increase the life of the blooms.



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Because the fall-blooming crocus is low to the ground, you will want to carefully select where you plant them. You will not get to enjoy them if placed next to shrubs that will hide them.

A beautiful way to accent your crocus is to plant a ground cover over them. The flowers look beautiful poking through lush, thick ground cover. Remember to use a

low-growing ground cover for the crocus, something like creeping thyme or creeping Jenny.

Some colchicum to consider: "Giant" (Colchicum giganteum); "Velebit

Star" (Colchicum hungaricum); and Colchicum agrippinum.

Some crocus to consider: "White Autumn Crocus" (Crocus kotschyanus); Saffron Crocus (Crocus sativus) and Fall Blooming Crocus Mix (Crocus spp).

And, as always, there are so many more varieties to choose from than what I have mentioned above so enjoy choosing just the right ones for your beautiful garden.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners via email at douglasmg@oregonstate.edu, by phone at 541-672-4461 or visit 1134 SE Douglas Ave., Roseburg.