

'TIS THE SEASON FOR WINTER PLANTING



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Primroses are vibrant and easy-to-grow options for wintertime gardening.

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Question: My yard is looking dreary. Are there flowers I can plant now for winter color?

Answer: Fall is the time of year the plant world begins to “go to sleep,” and we may not think of it as a time for flowers to bloom; however, our climate is mild enough to offer us the option of winter flowers.

The addition of winter bloomers to garden beds, along walkways or to pots and hanging baskets will create a bright pop of color in the darker months.

And for those who enjoy gardening year-round, adding these colorful beauties to your to-do list offers up another excuse to be outdoors and in the garden.

For winter color and interest, consider adding one or more of the following to your outdoor spaces.

Hardy cyclamen (*Cyclamen coum*), a perennial, comes in a variety of colors –white, pink, red as well as variegated and blooms in November

or December. The plant grows from an underground storage unit called a corm. These pretty little plants have blossoms that resemble stars or butterflies on narrow stems, above a clusters of attractive, variegated leaves.

Sometimes, they are sold as bulbs in the fall, but most often, you can find them growing in four inch pots; they can easily be clustered in larger pots for a bold statement. Often available around the holiday season, as the colors go well with the typical colors of the season. This species comes from Middle Eastern countries and is hardy to USDA Zone 5.

Ornamental cabbage or kale (sometimes called flowering kale) are close relatives of the edible cabbages and kale but are not quite as tasty as they were developed for their wonderful colors and textures. They come in a variety of striking colors—red, purple, white, pink and work well in the garden in the fall and winter with minimal care.

Although they may produce a tall stem of minimal flowers, they are most prized for their extravagantly ruffled leaves.

To keep the plants looking fresh, you may wish to cut off the flowering stems when they appear.

Like their edible “cousins,” ornamental cabbage and kale are cool season plants; both can provide a bold statement of color in the fall through spring, when the temperatures are cooler; use them in borders and containers. They will grow to be about 18 inches tall and wide.

We often see the pansy in our summer gardens; however, this plant is a terrific, easy-to-grow winter bloomer as they prefer cooler weather. Pansy plants are about 6-10 inches high, with flowers 2-4 inches wide.

Often used for mass color in borders and edgings, the pansy comes in a wide variety of colors and bi-colors; most have dark blotches on the lower petals, which make the flowers resemble small “faces.”

With regularly pinching off of spent blossoms, the pansy will bloom all winter. Added to hanging baskets or pots outside entry doors, they will provide a cheerful, colorful welcome. And an extra bonus, pansies

are edible.

The primrose is an easy to grow perennial and is a good fit for the Pacific Northwest garden. It grows in small clumps, usually 4-6 inches in height and 4-6 inches in spread.

They come in a wide variety of colors, including yellow, pink, blue or white and can provide a bright spot of color

from November through April. They too work well as border plants, and clustered together will make a strong color statement.

Look for these winter bloomers at your local nurseries and garden centers. If you don’t see them in stock, inquire if new plants will be arriving soon. Happy winter gardening!



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Create a bold statement in the garden with ornamental cabbage or kale, which grows best fall through spring.