

Allium moly

You may cook with *Allium cepa* (common cooking onion) and *Allium sativum* (garlic), but have you considered using the ornamental alliums in your garden? There are about 500 species of alliums so there should be a few to fit your landscape.

Alliums are a spring-flowering bulb that should be planted in the fall before the first frost. Here are a few good reasons to plant several.

- They come in various colors including shades of purple, pink, blue, yellow, and white.
- Alliums are available in sizes ranging from 8 inches to 5 feet tall and blooms up to 6 inches in diameter.
- Allium blooms range from tidy ball shapes to wild sprays that closely resemble a "bad hair day".
- Bloom time can range from late spring to mid-summer by using multiple species. Most alliums are a perfect ornamental to provide color in the garden after the early spring bulbs have faded and before the summer perennials come to life.
- Planting is a breeze. The most important factor is good drainage since the bulbs can rot if exposed to standing water. Plant alliums in full sun or partial shade and they will reward you with years of beauty.
- Alliums are also great used in dried flower arrangements. If left standing, the large dry flower balls add interest to the garden through most of the summer.
- Alliums are disease and pest-resistant. Deer will not touch an allium.

A few of our favorite alliums include:

| Name | Description | Bloom Time |
|---------------------------|---|------------------|
| <i>A. azureum</i> | Cornflower-blue flowers on 1-foot stalks. | Late Spring |
| <i>A. bulgaricum</i> | Bell-shaped purple and white flowers hang from tall stems. These will definitely attract attention in the garden. | Early Summer |
| <i>A. giganteum</i> | Probably the tallest and largest bloom of all alliums. Lilac flowers remain attractive even after drying. | Early-Mid Summer |
| <i>A. moly</i> | Bright yellow flowers adorn these small 10" plants. They are great used in borders and bouquets. | Early-Mid Summer |
| <i>A. sphaerocephalum</i> | These 2-3 foot tall dark purple alliums are commonly called drumsticks. Plant a cluster of at least 10 bulbs for a dramatic effect. | Early Summer |

You should be getting the idea by now that alliums are easy to grow and require very little care. Throw some bulbs in the garden this fall and reap the rewards next spring.

References

Hill, Lewis & Nancy. *Bulbs: Four Seasons of Beautiful Blooms*. Vermont: Storey Communications, Inc., 1994.

Sunset Western Garden Book. California: Sunset Publishing Corp., 2001.

Alliums: Mystical, Medicinal, and Memorable. www.bulb.com/