

# This is called planning ahead

It's that time again — time to plan for spring and fall beauty in our yards and gardens.

One flower which will give many years of pleasure and isn't too commonly grown is the colchicum (pronounced kol-ki-kum) of the Liliaceae family. It produces a crocuslike flower and blooms in the fall.

The corns of colchicum should be planted now in a rich soil that can retain some moisture, either in full sun or light shade. When planting cover with three inches of soil and water regularly during the growing season. It isn't necessary to fertilize. In the spring leaves will appear and then die down, with the flower show in September and October. Because the foliage turns brown and is unattractive, colchicums are best planted in the shrub border, in an out-of-the-way spot that needs to be perked up a bit with color in the fall

or among ground covers such as vinca, lamium and sweet woodruff so that foliage can be disguised.

The corns are also excellent for pot culture and have a rare trait of blooming with little care. For someone without a garden or a green thumb for that matter, it is an excellent flower to possess. Simply place the corns upright in a bowl with one or two inches of water, or until it touches the bottom of the corn, placed on a windowsill or table (out of direct sunlight, please) and you will be rewarded with quite a show. Grown in this manner the bloom may not be as nice as those grown outside, but it will be a welcome sight anyway. After flowering the corns can be planted in the garden where they will flower again next fall.

COLCHICUM WATERLILY, the

largest, and colchicum the giant both have lilac colored flowers. Colchicum autumnale album, pure white flowers; and colchicum byzantinum with lilac-pink blooms are a few for your consideration. The latter one and the giant are especially suited for window sill gardening.

Two to four inches of soil is all that is needed to cover the corns of the fall flowering crocus. The corns will adjust themselves to the proper depth because of the root structure. Although colchicum and crocus have the same flower shape and low growth habit (crocus, 3-5 inches and colchicum 6-7 inches) that is where the relationship ends.

Crocus are in the Iridaceae (iris) family. They like well-drained soil and generally a sunny location. They can be planted in drifts, between stepping stones, in rock gardens, beneath shrubbery or in indoor pots. A little fertilizer at planting time will help assure a good start. Again water regularly during the growing season.

A few of the fall-blooming crocuses include: crocus speciosus, the easiest to grow, has blooms with a blue-violet hue with a vermilion-orange throat. Crocus speciosus albus is a rare white form of the above, with orange anthers. Crocus



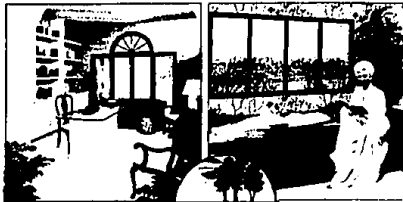
down to earth

**Marty Figley**

zonatus emerges as pale pink and deepens to luscious rose with an orange throat. This one is hardy and multiplies well in sun or shade. It is also good for indoor culture. Yellow is rarely seen in a fall-blooming crocus, but crocus sternbergia lutea major fills this void. A sunny location with a wall or rock to the north for protection and a winter mulch will help see this one through the cold winter.

Now, after the corns are planted you can look forward to a nice surprise next fall when these flowering beauties appear.

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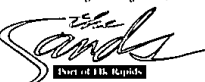


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