

## GARDEN SPOT

## Native plants are a hardy garden choice



MARTY FIGLEY

"What's new?" is a common greeting that could well be extended to "What's new in the garden world?" when gardeners get together. The answer is, "A lot!"

One of the most recent trends is the use of native plants in our gardens. This assures that they are acclimated to grow well in the same conditions and zones in which their ancestors began. It also indicates that they may require less care because they are stronger plants and are therefore less stressed. Stressed plants invite disease and insects.

Another factor to consider is water requirements. Native plants have been living on just the water that Mother Nature provides, without supplemental watering. Watch for more of these "homebodies" to be available each year.

Going right along with this trend is a more natural garden look — less manicured and contrived. Look for "Cottage Garden" ideas in magazines and books.

A third growing trend is the use of herbs intermingled with perennial borders and foundation plantings. These plants add beauty and function to the

landscape and can open up a whole new world of gardening.

## New blooms

Goldsmith Seeds has introduced an ivy geranium with double deep crimson blooms. Look for "Simone."

This company also has several new petunias. "Heavenly Lavender," an F1 hybrid, performed beautifully in my garden last year and is one of the All-America Selections Award winners for this year. This bedding plant is a multiflora double petunia that blooms several days earlier than other doubles. The color is most unusual and striking.

AAS has also chosen the F1 petunia "Fantasy Pink Mom," a multiflora petunia. Multiflora means many small blooms. This small plant is suitable for containers, borders and rock gardens because of its size.

The third AAS winner is Salvia farinacea "Strata," a blue and white bicolor flower. It is heat, drought and severe weather tolerant.

Local nurseries or garden centers will carry these this spring; ask for them by name.

The National Garden Bureau has introduced many new varieties of flowers and vegetables for 1996. If you would like a list, send a stamped, self-ad-

dressed envelope to me at The Eccentric, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

## Radishing

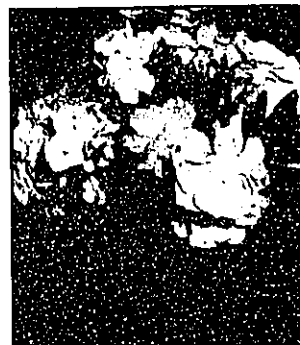
This organization has declared 1996 as the Year of the Sunflower (which I will tell you about when we talk about our sunflower contest) and the Year of the Radish.

The radish is one of the most ancient of cultivated vegetables, dating back to the seventh century B.C. Radishes aren't only red, some have shades of white, scarlet, rose, lavender and black; interior colors include white, pink, green or tints of deep rose. Sizes range from an ounce to 70 pounds. Surprisingly, this vegetable is a member of the mustard, or Cruciferae, family.

## New ideas

New ideas at the recent Garden Writers meeting I attended include the following:

Use a premium rather than an all-purpose potting media for house plants. The two are different in composition and benefits, with the premium having added amendments to promote healthier growth. Many premium soilless mixes contain sphagnum peat moss that is harvested in Minnesota.



MARTY FIGLEY

Heavenly: "Heavenly Lavender" petunia as a cut flower, along with orange cosmos and white phlox.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (313) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1859. Her fax number is (810) 644-1314.

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