

## Fall is Lurking

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Suddenly, the daylilies are over, and their bare stems interrupt the eye's progress as I survey my beds. The early-blooming hostas are in that raggedy stage that makes me remember why I didn't used to like them—and with just a little effort, I think, I can transform them back to glossy mounds again. And shouldn't I cut down the *Campanula lactiflora* entirely? It isn't pretty in its brown state, and it interferes with the graceful curves of the waving tall clumps of *Miscanthus*. And when did that Henry Kelsey climber send out those eight-foot feelers? If only they weren't so wickedly thorny!

Well, it isn't "just a little effort," of course, and furthermore getting into it by this back door, so to speak, I am suddenly aware of a thousand things that cry out to be done NOW, while it is just a bit cooler and I have just watered. Trimming up tired plants leads me to look into all the beds, and see, for instance, where some precious small plants are swamped by the stunning growth of a young *Hosta* 'Regal Splendor', and how ready the little *Primula* 'Wanda' is for dividing. Wanda has already made a three-foot patch from one original plant three years ago, and I can make a curving six-foot drift out of the sturdy plants today. I love the brilliant pink of Wanda's short-stemmed clump in May, and they last for simply weeks. What a sweep of color that will be! I haul off the weed-bag full of trimmings, dump it on the compost and get out my tools for digging.

Carefully moving two nice sedges out of a cramped corner, I notice two ruby-red lanterns on *Trillium rubrum*; wonderful! They have made seed pods for me! One has fallen off and I take it inside to save it from mice, ants, and birds; the other I leave on the stem in case it needs to ripen further. I got those from Gene Bush; better e-mail him and find out how to propagate those darling plants. These ones have really red blossoms, not just dull maroon, and I would love a little forest of them. No luck with *Arisaema sikkokianum*; I thought sure I would have a bunch of red berries this year. And wouldn't THAT be fun! *A. ringens* didn't set seed either. I hope they aren't sterile.

It is supper time when I finally look at that berm and like the way it looks—*Lamium* 'Pink Pewter' is pretty in bloom, but messy in the middle of a bed, and taking it out has freed up the entire area around that hosta, showing off the pale standing fronds of "The Ghost" fern as well. Several *Epimediums* and small *Astilbes* are set off by better placement, too, and some actually got moved all the way out to the new bed under the old spruce. Now that garden looks more finished too! And then I see about a hundred seedlings of the Nakoma pass-along pink primrose in the nicely composted bark path across the way. Oh shoot. Another job. But wait. I think I had better leave them until spring, and put them in in situ. If I try to pot them up I will lose many, and putting them in the beds now is too risky. Who knows what this weather is going to do?

Tired and happy, I truck all the tools up the hill and look back. Everything is in balance. But couldn't I use just a touch of deep purple right there, with all the gold variegated hostas behind it? Right beside the gaudy, bushy *Persicaria*, with its limey green leaves with their purple chevrons? And right under the golden Full Moon maple? Better go to the Flower Factory tomorrow. I am sure I will find *Cimicifuga simplex* 'Purpurea' there. Deep, deep purple leaves, and white spikes in October. Just what I need!

—Joan Severa