

# Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

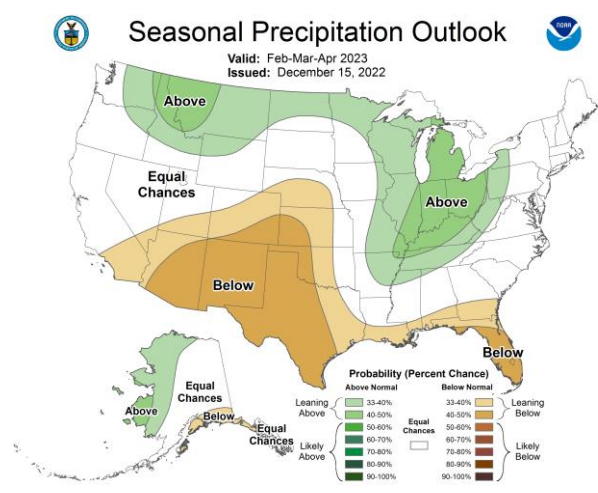
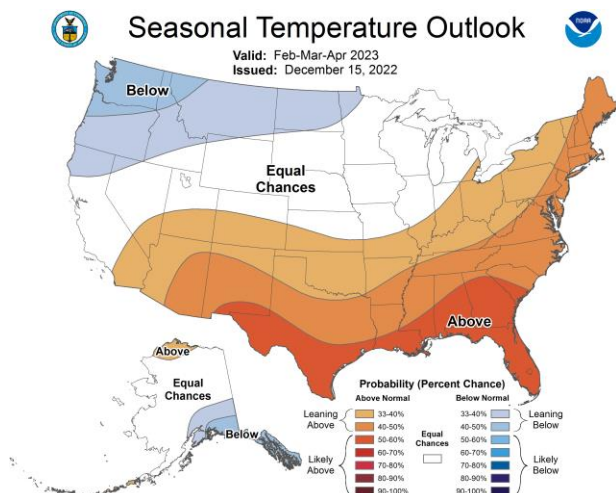
January 2023 Issue

Written and compiled by Ricky D. Kemery, Allen County Extension Educator Retired, phone: 260 - 431- 6893

**Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture** is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to [kemeryr7@frontier.com](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

## Weather Prognostications

According to experts from the climate prediction center at NOAA., we will experience warmer, wetter weather this spring heading into summer. The issue is where the jet stream sets up. This will decide whether we experience rain, ice, or big snow events in January and February. Looking at longer range forecasts in early summer suggests that we will have a very wet spring once again.



## 2023 Gardening Trends *From Growing Family*

*Each year garden prognosticators predict trends for what gardeners will focus on for the upcoming year. I don't agree with all of the predictions, but only time will tell if these predictions come to pass.*

**Frugal :** With the cost of living crisis showing no signs of abating, saving money in the garden is set to be a key trend for 2023. Gardening on a budget is all about finding ways to get a beautiful garden without breaking the bank. This could be through growing plants from seed, buying secondhand tools and equipment, up-cycling, sharing tools and plants with neighbors, or making your own compost. **Ricky's comment:** The cost of food could drive many folks to continue or take up vegetable gardening as a way to save denaro.

**Sustainable:** This is another garden trend for 2023 that has appeared before. Sustainable gardening is an ongoing method of limiting our impact on the planet in our outdoor spaces. Key gardening trends to look out

for include up-cycled containers and ornaments, home composting, growing your own vegetables, and wildlife-friendly gardening.

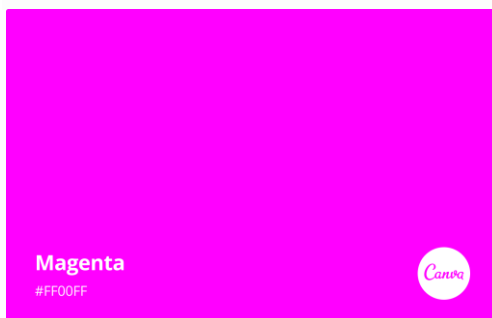
**Cut Flowers :** Cut flower gardening has seen a rise in popularity over recent years, and that's definitely going to continue. Growing your own flowers for bouquets and indoor arrangements will save you money and is also a far more eco-friendly way to enjoy cut flowers.

**Vertical Gardening:** Vertical gardening continues to be a key garden trend for 2023. Garden brands have caught onto this, and there's a great range of planters on the market that are specifically designed to make use of vertical outdoor spaces including hanging baskets to shelving, trellis and living walls.

**Sanctuary Gardens / Garden Art and Sculpture:** 2023 will see a trend towards incorporating lighting and garden sculptures, reflecting our growing use of outdoor spaces in the evenings.

**Foliage plants** are often the unsung heroes of a planting scheme. In 2023 we'll see them start to take center stage. Foliage plants can provide structure, texture, depth, color and height in a planting scheme, whether that's in pots or a large border. Look out for foliage plants being used to create a sensory experience, lead the eye to a feature plant, or provide shade in a drought-tolerant combination.

The popular **indoor gardening trend** is set to continue for 2023, with Instagram -friendly houseplants still taking center stage on many social media feeds. As well as the ever-popular succulents, monstera and philodendron, we will see more unusual varieties popping up as plant parents add to their collections. Plant trends involving interesting leaf color, shape and texture are all big ticks for houseplant wow factor.



**Magenta** is the Pantone 2023 color of the year, and you can definitely expect to see it featuring in garden design trends. Viva Magenta is “a crimson red tone that presents a balance between warm and cool.” This color lends itself well to the garden. You can use it in large quantities to make a bold statement, or frugally for a pop of color. Expect to see it on powder-coated furniture, plant pots, rugs and outdoor dining accessories. **Ricky's Comment:** I am going to pass on this one-my eyes hurt.

## New Plants

This is the time of year when companies release their catalogs that we gardeners look through and excitedly look at new plants to add for this year's garden. Each year, we have a decision on whether we have any room left to squeeze a new plant into. Sigh It will be interesting to see if pandemic gardeners will continue to grow and add to gardens that were started when folks were more isolated and looking for things to do. Prices have been high for plants at garden centers and online because of supply chain issues. Will inflation result in very high prices for plants this year?.. Another sigh.

**Walter's Gardens** is a Michigan nursery that has a history of offering unusual plants. Here are a few of their new Proven Winners plants for this season.  
<https://www.waltersgardens.com/article.php?CfgID=2036>



***Agastache* MEANT TO BEE™ 'Queen Nectarine'**

Height: 30-36" | Spread: 32-36" | Zones: 5-9

(Anise Hyssop, Hummingbird Mint) Members of this collection were selected for their large, full habits, significant landscape presence, and hardiness. Each variety has reliably overwintered in our Zone 6 West Michigan winters and Zone 5 trial sites. Best performance comes in full sun with well drained soils.

Soft peach flowers are held on the mauve calyxes of 'Queen Nectarine'.



***Allium* 'Bubble Bath'**

Height: 26-28" | Spread: 24-26" | Zones: 4-8

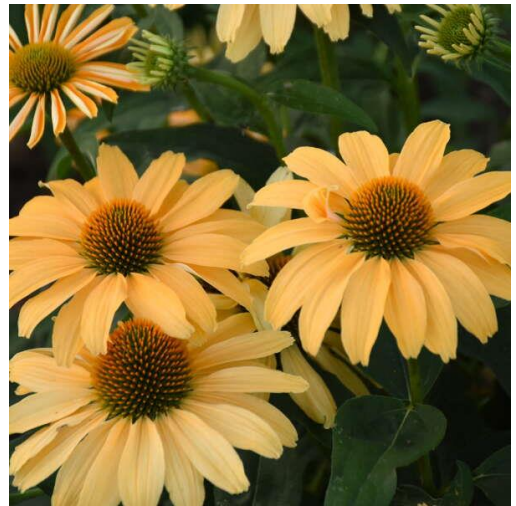
(Ornamental Onion) Soft lavender flower clusters are held on strong stems above a mound of glaucous blue green foliage. The wide, linear leaves have a slight twist. Compared to 'Millenium', 'Bubble Bath' has lighter purple flowers on larger 3" flower clusters.



## *Echinacea* COLOR CODED® 'One in a Melon'

Height: 24-26" | Spread: 18-20" | Zones: 4-8

(Coneflower) Melon-colored flowers and matching melon cones. At 5-5½" wide these are among the largest flowers in the collection. Petals are held horizontally and overlap for maximum display.



## *Iris* *ampliflora* 'Ming Treasure'

Height: 44-48" | Width: 48-54" | Zones: 6b-9

(Ampliflora Iris) One of the best new hybrid discoveries of the past decade, *I. ampliflora* is an unknown interspecific hybrid possibly involving *I. tectorum* (Japanese Roof Iris) and is sterile. The original hybrid was found naturally occurring in the south central region of China, notable among other species for its impressive large plant and flower size. 'Ming Treasure' is a vigorous selection of *I. ampliflora* and can perhaps best be described as *I. tectorum* on steroids. The plant is significantly larger than most other species of Iris and has a commanding presence in the landscape. Numerous 4½" flowers are mid-violet with a yellow crest and small white signal area, appearing on well-branched scapes. Ricky's Note:

The plant is hardy to 6b, so in theory it should survive in Fort Wayne. To me it seems worth the risk considering how unusual this plant is.

## *Panicum virgatum* PRAIRIE WINDS® 'Niagara Falls'

Height: 4' | Spread: 4' | Zones: 4-9

(Switch Grass) This native ornamental grass that appears like a *Miscanthus* in the landscape with arching foliage but adds the powder blue color characteristic of Switch Grass. In fall, sprays of cream seed heads pack the top of the plant. Ricky's note: I don't know if it is an advantage to look like a *Miscanthus*, but it does look full and imposing if massed and should not spread like *Miscanthus*.



## *Perovskia atriplicifolia* 'Prime Time'

Height: 30-36" | Width: 24-30" | Zones: 4-9

(Russian Sage) An upgrade to 'Rocketman' with earlier bloom and denser flower spikes. Dusky purple calyxes hold blue flowers. The upright habit is made of slightly dissected oval leaves for a very full appearance.

[Learn More](#)



## A Mischievous Robot Cleaner

I am quite pleased with my Roborock mobile vacuum cleaner. Each day at 11:00 AM it awakens (it's a late sleeper) and ventures out in my home – happily cleaning my floors before returning to its base to rest and recharge. Most of the time it cleans my floors with no incident. Until several days ago....

I have in my possession - courtesy of the Choice program through Aging and In Home services – a “Help me I've fallen” device I wear around my neck in case I fall when no one is around to help. If I happen to fall - then my bad knees prevent me from getting up off the floor- and that is bad thing... and embarrassing.

It's a nice device to have as a senior. It does need recharging occasionally – and occasionally I am reminded by the monitoring company if it begins to run low on charge. To recharge the device however, It has to be placed on the floor near a plug – in this case near my Christmas tree in the corner.

I was working on this newsletter the other day when Rocky – the name of my vacuum – began its rounds. After a bit – I stopped writing. I heard something.. something that wasn't right. Was something calling my name? I realized that off in the distance, I heard my name being called. What's going on,? I thought. Listening my closely, I realized that a disembodied voice was asking me If I was ok. I yelled out to the distant voice “I'm OK!!!!” Was someone at the door asking if I was OK.? Soon, I received a phone call from the monitoring service - asking If I was OK. After investigation, I realized what happened. Rocky had vacuumed near the Christmas tree device and tried to suck my “I've fallen and I can't get up device” inside the cleaner. The robot cleaner drug the device into my living room, where it somehow pressed the bottom on the device to call for help. I realized that these set of circumstances could and would only happen to me.....Never trust your Robot vacuum device....

## Richters Herb and Vegetables

Richters is a Canadian company that sells about every herb known to humankind. They sell seeds, plants, and plugs to consumers and commercial growers. I like to order plants that are shipped in late spring in small containers that are reasonably priced. The catalog also has many varieties of garlic that one can order which is nice. The catalog also contains some flowers, and vegetable varieties – many which are unusual. You can order by mail or online at richters.com. Shipping costs are a bit pricey, and there are minimum orders for plants.



# More New Stuff

## Ficus 'Little Ruby' Fig

*It seems as if everyone want to grow a fig tree nowadays.*



One of the earliest fruit trees to be cultivated, indigenous to regions from Asiatic Turkey to northern India, and grown widely in Mediterranean countries, *Ficus carica*, also called common fig, is a temperate species that prefers full sun, dry weather during fruiting, and some winter chilling. Ficus grow very well in cool coastal climates. In colder climates, plant ficus in a warm, dry location and generously mulch before winter.

Ficus 'Little Ruby', a compact multibranched shrub or small tree, rarely grows taller than 4 to 6 feet high, but it can be pruned to a desired size. The tree has broad and deeply lobed deciduous leaves and has ornamental value in the garden or container. 'Little Ruby' is self-pollinating and starts bearing fruit 1 to 2 years after planting without any pollen from other varieties.

One of the easiest fruits to grow, Ficus requires at least 8 hours of sunlight during the growing season but grows well in a wide range of soil types. Drought tolerant, usually satisfied with natural rainfall, this tree is a good choice for xeriscapes and water-wise gardens. It is disease and deer resistant and generally pest free. Available from Wayside Gardens

**Look for the following at Garden Centers this spring**



*Penstemon hartwegii* 'Flock of Flamingos' (ThinkPlants/Terra Nova Nurseries)

*Petunia* 'RIMarkable' (below)





Pepper - Peppers From Heaven Series (Burpee)

*Kniphofia* 'Rocket  
(Terra Nova

I think one could do great things with this cute little plant that only reaches 12 inches in height. Used as a front edging plant in a perennial border – or planted along walkways – or in a mass planting – the effect would be striking and unusual.



Jr.'

## Snake Plant

Some material compiled from an article by Briana Yablonski



Snake Plant, *Dracaena trifasciata*, is a species of flowering plant in the Asparagus family native to tropical West Africa - from Nigeria east to the Congo. It is most commonly known as Snake plant, Saint George's sword, mother-in-law's tongue, and viper's bowstring hemp. Until 2017, it was known under the name *Sansevieria trifasciata*. In the early 2000s, scientists performed molecular analysis of plant DNA and found that snake plants were more closely related to *Dracaena* species. Thanks again, plant taxonomy name changers.

Swedish naturalist Carl Peter Thunberg brought the snake plant to Italy in 1794. He named the plant genus *Sansevieria* after Prince Raimondo di Sangro of the San Serveo region in Southeast Italy. Sorry Prince Raimondo – you are out of the game....

Snake plant is an easy-to-grow houseplant that tolerates a wide range of cultural and environmental conditions. Indoor plants may be placed in shady outside locations in summer. Propagate by leaf cuttings or dividing offsets. Under optimal growing conditions, snake plants can live for 20 years or more. Sometimes, extremely pot-bound Snake plants can produce very fragrant sprays of tiny flowers.. Since it's rare for snake plants to bloom indoors, a snake plant flower symbolizes good luck and prosperity. If your snake plant flowers, more good things are ahead!

Some people in West African countries use the snake plant in rituals that aim to remove the evil eye. People also value snake plants for their ability to protect against harm. While the snake plants are not native to Asia, people have grown these plants there for over a hundred years. In China, people highly regard snake plants for their abilities to provide the eight valuable virtues. Therefore, these plants are seen as valuable houseplants and good gifts.

Koreans also value the snake plant. Potted snake plants are popular gifts when someone opens a business or moves into a new home. Some Africans also used the leaves' strong fibers to create bowstrings, hence the common name bowstring hemp. The plant's fibers were also used to make slingshots, baskets, and rope. People, including the Maasai, have used snake plants to treat scrapes, cuts, and burns. Research has shown that some species of snake plants contain anti-inflammatory compounds.

## Using Leaves – Never Too Early—or Too Late

One can use breaks in the winter weather to go outside in the bracing air to collect matted leaves to use in the garden. It's a good time to top raised beds with layers of leaves. As spring progresses, the leaves will release nutrients into the soil and keep down early weeds. One can rake leaves near landscape trees and shrubs to provide early weed control and slow-release fertilizer.



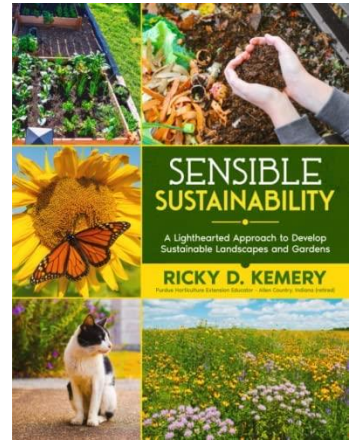
## Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

**To my caregiver:** I am quite distressed with the robot vacuum cleaner – who in a frantic fit of cleaning- disappeared with my favorite cat toy- a miniature version of PepelaPhew. I will attack this monstrosity of a cleaner and ride it like a bucking bronco.



## ***Ricky's Book!***

***My book, Sensible Sustainability*** is out and available on Amazon as a Kindle book and a deluxe larger soft-cover copy. Thank you for ordering the book if you did so. Based on reviews, people seem to like the blend of info and humor that is my style of writing.



## **Teaching Again:**

I was asked by PFU University to teach Hort 101 - Fundamentals of Horticulture - this spring semester. So far I have 8 students. It has been a lot of work to prepare modules for online learning, and to meet with the students in the laboratory section of the class. I took the course at IPFW in 1987, was a teaching assistant for the class when I was at Purdue and taught the class at Vincennes University in the early 1990's. I debated the idea of taking the offer, but I have enjoyed teaching – and I have help to do the job from good friends. I will let you know how it goes.

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