

# Fall Pansies

I stopped by a local nursery to check on Fall Mums for my garden and was treated to a variety of Pansies. Did you know that the Pansies that are available now will brighten up your fall garden and come back in the spring?

## *History*

The history of the pansy is linked forever to the viola, its ancestor. Viola is a large genus containing 500 species. Violas were familiar to people living in Greece in the 4th century B.C. The center of origin for violas was continental Europe. The hardy but delicate viola was cultivated by the Greeks for herbal medicinal use.

Sometime after the 4th century B.C. in Europe, an acute observer noticed a plant similar to a viola but growing in open areas with more sunlight. This plant thrived in alpine meadows and on rocky ledges. Someone named this plant a wild pansy. Possibly, it was a person living in France who noticed this plant because the word pansy is traced back to the French word *pensee*, meaning thought or remembrance.

Now known as *Viola tricolor*, this early wild pansy had two clear differences from the viola. The plant grew from the ground on one main stem and branched above ground. Viola plants branch below ground with many plants sharing the same root system. The wild pansy bloom was larger and more round than violas.

Violas and wild pansies were cultivated in Europe by many gardeners. The origin of the plants we now call pansy began in Iwer, Buckinghamshire, England. In the early 1800's an inquisitive Lord Gambier and his gardener William Thompson began crossing various *Viola* species. Crosses were made among *V. tricolor*, *V. lutea* and a blue flowered species possibly of Russian origin, *V. altica*. Breeders selected plants for unusual colors, color combinations and increasing flower size. The initial results were similar to the *V. tricolor*. History credits the gardener, William Thompson, with the discovery of a cross that began the new species *V. x Wittrockiana*. He found a bloom that no longer had lines of dark color on the flower but huge blocks of color on the lower petals called the "face." Discovered in 1839 and named "Medora," this pansy and its progeny became popular with gardeners and breeders throughout Europe.

By 1850 many new strains of pansies were available to Europeans. Breeding occurred in England, Scotland and Switzerland. Hybridization was used to breed more plant vigor and flowers that had no dark blocks or lines. These clear pansies without a face were bred about the turn of the 20th century. Credit is given to a Scottish grower, Dr. Charles Stewart, for discovering the pansy with clear colors, no face.

Across the Atlantic, North American gardeners welcomed this newly bred flower. The pansy gained popularity rapidly. In an 1888 mail-order catalog, the pansy is described as "The most popular of all flowers grown from seed--our sales exceeding one hundred thousand packets a year." That's a lot of pansy seed, even in today's market.

In the last 50 years much of the innovative pansy breeding has been in Germany, the United States and Japan. New pansy colors such as shades of pink, rose or orange and unusual bicolor designs have expanded the variety of pansies available to gardeners in North America.

Pansies are adaptable small, charming plants. At any time of the year, a pansy will be blooming prolifically outdoors someplace in North America. The vast majority of pansy bedding plants are grown in gardens for fall and winter blooms. Many regions in California grow pansies outdoors all year. It is certainly a "plant for all seasons."

Pansy blooms are single with five petals that are rounded in shape. Pansy flowers have one of three basic color patterns. Blooms can be single, clear color, such as yellow or blue. A second pattern is a single color having black lines radiating from its center. These lines are called penciling and are similar to viola markings. The last type of flower is probably the one most familiar to home gardeners. The bloom of this type has a dark center called a "face."

The pansy has one of the widest color ranges of any garden annual. Included in the wide color range are red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot and mahogany. The flowers may be of a single color or have two or three colors with a face.

The plant itself is compact, not more than 9 inches in both height and spread, and bears many stems. The medium green, coarsely notched leaves are oval or heart-shaped.

### *Bedding Plants*

Gardeners who seek instant color in their garden will find packs and flats of pansies at their local nursery or garden center. Pansies can be grown from seed but this late in the fall it is best to buy transplants. Select the flower colors that suit your garden design. Choose plants that are stocky with dark green foliage. If there are just a few blooms but many buds, this is the right plant for your garden. Pansies perform best in a garden location that receives morning sun and has well-draining soil. If the soil is not ideal, it may be amended to increase drainage.

### *Planting*

Use the same procedure for planting bedding plants. Space the holes about six to ten inches apart. If you have not added organic matter to your soil to boost fertility, now is the time to add fertilizer. A granular or time release fertilizer can be incorporated into the garden soil as you are planting the pansies. By adding a granular fertilizer now, food is easily provided for the plants' long term garden performance.

The final step is to water the newly planted pansies thoroughly. Moving the pansies from container to garden is a stress on the plants; it is crucial that they receive plenty of water during this adjustment period.

Check out the local Garden centers and buy some Pansies for your garden.

### ***Beltsville Agriculture Research Tour - November 4th***

The Forum for Rural Innovation is sponsoring a one day bus tour of the USDA Beltsville Agriculture Research Center on November 4, 2009. The tour is being planned to highlight the innovative agriculture research of plants, animals, human nutrition, and the environment. The Beltsville ARC is the largest USDA research facility in the United States, encompassing over 7,000 acres, and located at Beltsville, Maryland. It is a dynamic, highly diversified research facility, dating back to 1910. The tour will focus on agriculture industries and practices that can be implemented to our region, and highlight some of the historic research conducted at Beltsville. The tour bus will depart from Purcellville at 7:30 am and will return by 5:30 pm. All participants must pre-register and ride the bus. A \$35.00 per person registration fee will include bus transportation, snacks, and lunch. Registration is limited to 55 persons, and will be on a first-come first-served basis. Registration information is available at [www.LoudounFarms.org](http://www.LoudounFarms.org) or by calling 703-777-0426. This tour and the Forum for Rural Innovation are sponsored by the Offices of Agricultural Economic Development and Cooperative Extension -Loudoun, Fauquier, Clarke, Fredrick (VA), and Jefferson, Berkeley (WV), and the Shenandoah and Potomac Headwaters RC&D.

### ***Master Gardener Rain Garden Maintenance***

The Baltimore Street rain garden, needs weeding, etc. and MG's are helping to keep it in shape. New class students may earn volunteer hours by helping with this activity. Any Master Gardener can earn volunteer hours for helping with this activity. A scheduled workday has been set up for September, 29 at 4:30pm. For more information on this activity please contact Mary Palmer 304 - 754-5123 or Sandra Bernardi 304-267-6657.

### ***Western Maryland Goat Sale & Field Day, Saturday, October 3, 2009***

The 2nd Annual Western Maryland Goat Field Day and Sale will be held Saturday, October 3, 2009, at the Washington County Agricultural Education Center (fairgrounds) near Boonsboro, Maryland. The fairgrounds are adjacent to the University of Maryland's Western Maryland Research & Education Center.

Meat goat bucks from the Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test that meet Gold, Silver, and Bronze standards for growth, parasite resistance, parasite resilience, and minimum standards for reproductive and structural soundness will be offered for sale via public auction. This year there are 60 goats on test. Last year, 10 out of 58 goats on test qualified for the sale.

Thirty-four does have been consigned to the invitational doe sale. They include 25 fullblood, percentage and crossbred Kikos and 9 fullblood and percentage Boers. There are four yearling does and 30 doe kids. Doe consigners include ALL Boer Goats (MD), Losch's Riverview Farm Boer Goats (PA), Caprine Genetics (VA), Chey-View Acres (KY), Cedar Creek Farm (DE), and Don and Jenny Smith (VA).

All of the goats will be sold via silent auction. In a silent auction, bidding is done on paper. The goats are not paraded through a sale ring. A silent auction gives bidders more time to consider their purchases. The bidding period will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The person with the highest bid at 2 p.m. gets the goat.

The field day will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Dr. Richard Browning, a research animal scientist from Tennessee State University, will be the featured speaker. Dr. Browning is in the midst of conducting a multi-year breed evaluation study, comparing Boer, Kiko, and Spanish goats and their reciprocal crosses.

Running concurrent to the field day will be a goat skillathon for youth, ages 8 to 18. In the skillathon, youth will be tested on their knowledge of meat, dairy, and fiber goats. Pre-registration for the skillathon is requested by September 26. Information about the skillathon can be found at <http://www.sheepandgoat.com/programs/skillathon/goatskillathon.html> Lunch will be available for purchase at the fairgrounds. Contact Susan Schoenian at (301) 432-2767 x343 or [sschoen@umd.edu](mailto:sschoen@umd.edu) for information about the field day and sale and to pre-register youth for the skillathon.

### ***MGT-332: Agriculture and Food Vulnerability Assessment Training***

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), WV Department of Military Affairs and Public Safety (DMAPS), WV Department of Agriculture, and the Jefferson County Development Authority are offering free Agriculture and Food Vulnerability Assessment Training through the DHS Direct Delivery Program. This training, which has been certified and approved by DHS/FEMA, will strengthen the ability of state and local communities and industry to improve intelligence and operational capabilities for prevention and deterrence of terrorist acts that target the agriculture and food sector.

This is a one and one-half day class that is open to the agriculture and food industry, federal, state, county, and local officials, extension and crop specialists, agriculture crime units, food processors, food transportation, food wholesalers and retailers, food distributors, health department officials, emergency managements agencies, meat and poultry inspection and all others involved with food and agriculture security planning.

**When:** November 10-11, 2009-- Beginning at 8:00 a.m. on November 10 and conclude at approximately 4:30 p.m. Class will resume at 8:00 on November 11 and conclude at approximately 12:00 p.m.

**Where:** West Virginia University Tree Fruit Research and Education Center, 67 Apple Harvest Lane (Located On WV Route 9 in Jefferson County), Kearneysville, West Virginia 25403

**Cost:** No program fee. Lunch will be provided. WV Law Enforcement Training Committee has approved for 12 hours law enforcement in service hours. Travel and Lodging will be the responsibility of the attendee with NO reimbursement.

**Registration Deadline:** Wednesday November 4, 2009.

If you have any questions or require any assistance please contact Roy McCallister or Matt Blackwood, (304)-558-2214 or [rmccallister@ag.state.wv.us](mailto:rmccallister@ag.state.wv.us)

## **Garden Tips**

- Repot houseplants
- Water young trees and shrubs during dry periods
- At the end of the month bring in hummingbird feeders

***Until next time ...Happy Gardening and Farming!***