

Friends of Old Bulbs Gazette

[Old House Gardens](#), Ann Arbor, Michigan, 734-995-1486

"The breezes taste
Of apple peel.
The air is full
Of smells to feel-
Ripe fruit, old footballs,
Burning brush,
New books, erasers,
Chalk, and such.
The bee, his hive,
Well-honeyed hum,
And Mother cuts
Chrysanthemums.
Like plates washed clean
With suds, the days
Are polished with
A morning haze. "

– John Updike, 1932-2009, American novelist and poet,
"September", *A Child's Calendar*, 1965

Here Come the Fall Bulbs!

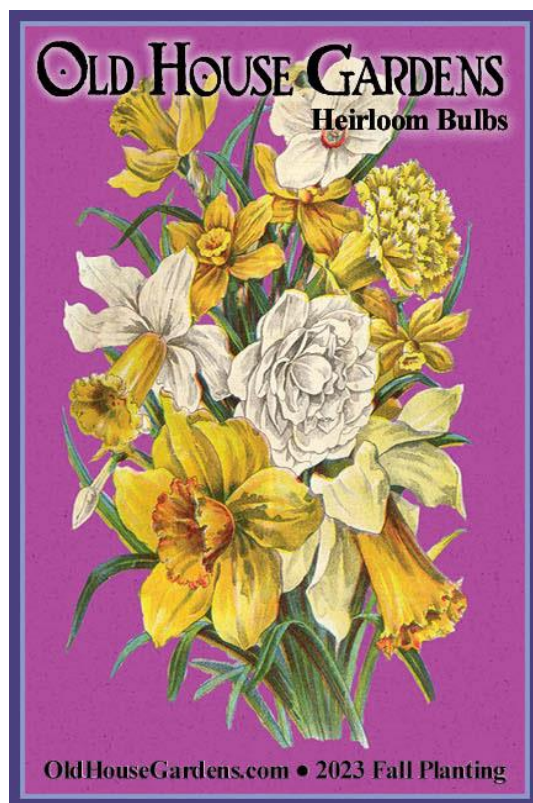


We're happy to report that our many crates of sturdy tulips, daffodils, and other bulbs from Holland are on their ship crossing the Atlantic to us now. We expect them to arrive (by truck) here in Ann Arbor by the last week of September and we plan to begin shipping October 2, beginning with customers in extremely cold zones and then the customers who ordered last winter. If we have your order now, we expect to have it to you by the end of October, a perfect time for most gardeners to plant. But don't worry – your bulbs will come with directions on when different varieties need to be planted and how best to store them if you can't plant immediately.

Sometimes we'll hear from customers who see that the big box stores already have fall bulbs for sale, and ask why we don't ship ours sooner. Mainly because it's better for the bulbs. All bulbs have to mature and dry after harvesting, especially daffodils which need to lose over 20% of their weight in moisture – and this takes time. But big box stores want to sell as many bulbs as possible before they start ramping up for Halloween, so mainstream growers have been forced to ship bulbs before they're ready. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't – and we don't want to take that risk with our rare jewels.

We hope you understand, and thanks for your patience!

Did You Move Over the Summer? Tell Us ASAP.



If so, please let us know your new shipping address – we'd hate for the bulbs you're eagerly anticipating end up sitting forlorn at your former residence or returned to us as undeliverable!

Order Now for the Best Selection!



['Aerolite' daffodil](#)



['Sapphire Beauty' iris](#)



['Princess Amalia' tulip](#)



['Prins Claus' crocus](#)

You may have already received a postcard from us reminding you that it's time to order for fall planting. (Its beautiful illustration was our catalog cover 20 years ago, and we wanted to bring it back in our 30th Anniversary Year – since we no longer publish a paper catalog, we knew it was the one for the postcard.) Fall orders have been streaming in, thanks to your enthusiastic response, and it seems that every day

Vanessa tells us about several more varieties that have just sold out. While we accept new fall orders through October, if there's a particular bulb that you've been meaning to order, avoid disappointment by doing so now through our [website](#), where you can see which pest-resistant [daffodils](#), vibrant [tulips](#), cheerful [crocus](#), long-lived [peonies](#), fragrant [hyacinths](#) and [lilies](#), and shade-tolerant or naturalizing [others](#) are still available. If you just want to add something to an existing order, drop us an email or give us a call to let us know what you'd like, but note that after September 22 it may not be possible to make any changes to existing orders as we ramp up for October shipping.

It's Dahlia Season! Tips for Cutting and Arranging



With night temperatures cooling as fall approaches, the dahlias in our gardens are blooming exuberantly. If yours are too, it's fine to just cut them (ideally early in the morning so they're well-hydrated) and put them right in a vase, but if you are looking for more ideas, here's what we do for extra-special fall bouquets.

Choose blossoms whose back petals are flat, not recurved. These will be the younger flowers that will last longer in the vase, perhaps as many as 3-4 days, and that won't drop spent petals on your table or shelf.

A single flower or little bouquet can be supported well in a small-necked vase. If your vase is large (and opaque), you can make a ball out of chicken wire to put inside it and then feed the stems through different holes to support and separate them. Or use

strips of floral or Scotch tape criss-crossed over the top of the vase to make mini-openings.

And it can be fun to try other types of vessels! At this time of year, Rita likes to hollow out a pumpkin, squash, or cabbage and set a jam jar or vase inside of it to hold the water and stems, or to simply drill holes in the pumpkin or squash, poke a stem in each, and let the moisture from the interior hydrate the bloom.

Although our dahlia bouquets tend to be mostly dahlias – or even just one dahlia – you can add goldenrods, asters, or other late-bloomers, twigs of ninebark or boxwood, or foliage like coleus or Sweet Annie.

If you'd like, share a photo (or other ideas) on our [Facebook page](#), and have fun!

Did You Have Prize-Winning Dahlias or Glads This Summer?

Some of us grow flowers for their beauty, brightening the days for ourselves, friends and neighbors, but some of us love to show our best blossoms in local competitions held by garden clubs, botanical gardens, and at county or state fairs. Please send us reports - and photos - of your successes this year. Which varieties do you swear by? Which have never let you down? We'd love to hear from folks across the country as we can always learn more about how each of these heritage varieties perform in different areas.

Do it NOW: Easy Fall Clean-Up Protects Your Iris and Peonies



iris borer



powdery mildew

We say this every fall because it's just so easy, important, and we have new subscribers since last fall (hurray!): For more flowers and healthier plants, give your peonies and iris a simple fall clean-up.

PEONIES – Although relatively care-free, peonies can be afflicted by powdery mildew (pictured here) and other fungal diseases.

To prevent spores from overwintering, cut stems as close to the ground as possible, carefully bagging *everything* as you go. It's best to do this earlier rather than later, before the leaves get dry and crumbly – or even as early as August if the foliage has been hard hit.

Disinfect your tools with rubbing alcohol or bleach between plants to avoid spreading disease. Dispose of all clippings in the trash. Do not compost!

If you've tried this and still have problems, you may also want to try a fungicidal spray. Mancozeb is one good choice. Drench the ground around the base of the peonies after your fall clean-up, and then spray in spring as soon as sprouts emerge and again every 7-10 days until bloom-time.

IRIS – Fall is also the best time to control iris borers which are a common pest in gardens east of the Rockies.

Borers hatch in spring from eggs laid in the fall on iris leaves and anything similar that's nearby. To destroy them, simply (a) wait until a hard frost kills the adult moths and then (b) cut back all leaves to a couple of inches and (c) remove, bag, and throw the clippings in the trash along with any nearby debris or mulch. Do not compost!

Fungal diseases such as leaf spot may also afflict iris, and fungicides such as mancozeb can help control them, too. Spray after fall clean-up and once again in early spring.

Healthier plants look better and bloom more – so get out there and give yours a boost!

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