

## **The Amazing Allium**

By Nancy C. -- Naperville Garden Club

The Allium species number as many as 1,000, including both wild and cultivated types. Garlic, onion, leeks, chives and decorative all belong to the botanical genus known as Allium. Heirloom flowering Alliums date back as far as 1594. Many well known current Biblical gardens contain various Alliums because they are referenced in the Old Testament. The decorative flowering Alliums differ in sizes—from short to very tall, with different size and type bloom heads.

Moly 'Jeannine' is a 12", yellow color that will grow in dry shade. 'Mount Everest' is an awesome 30" tall white. The 'Globemaster' is a giant among giants with a flower head so huge and dense; it has as many as 1,100 purple florets. 'Gladiator' can reach 50" tall and is a more violet-blue color. 'Hair' Allium is quite a conversation piece, with 2-3" green flower wiggle tendrils branching out at random from the center. 'Purple Sensation' is another favorite because of its reddish cast and it is so stunning close-up. Allium 'Schubertii' is like an exploding firework with an exuberant bloom reaching 12-15" in diameter. This variety is a bit more fragile in our Zone 5, so it needs to be well mulched. It can also get lost in a garden because it is only 12" tall and very light pink, so plant it toward the front. It makes a wonderful dried flower. The loose, open florets of 'Christophii' (Star of Persia) also make a beautiful dried seed head in everlasting arrangements.

I personally enjoy the way the purple lollipop round spheres of Allium float in my home garden... They are very easy to grow and are not prone to any diseases. Alliums like sun but do fine in partial shade. With so many super varieties, there is a spot for Allium in everyone's garden! If I could choose only one bulb to plant this fall...it would have to be an Allium.

### **Additional reasons to plant Allium bulbs:**

1. Rabbits, deer, mice and moles won't eat Alliums because they taste like onion.
2. Rich soil with bulb fertilizer is ideal, but poor Illinois clay-type soil will also work.
3. Bloom time is very late spring, which extends your garden's color.
4. The light, sweet fragrance attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.
5. Long lasting cut flower and a beautiful dried seed head can be sprayed with colored paint for designs and arrangements.
6. Allium is a perennial bulb that will multiply in your garden and come back year after year.

*Members of the Naperville Garden Club will be writing a monthly gardening-related article for area homeowner association newsletters. Our hope is that your interest in gardening will be piqued and that we can pass along some new and valuable information. This is a civic project for our club and we sincerely hope you will enjoy the articles. The Naperville Garden Club meets on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month. If you are interested in visiting one of our meetings or have any questions, please visit our web site at [www.napervillegardenclub.org](http://www.napervillegardenclub.org).*