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The Multifloral, Mellifluous, Memorable Pansy

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LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — When considering robust, colorful, fragrant flowers for the home or office gardenscape, don't forget that 1993 is the Year of the Pansy.

These "face"-like flowers, with single blooms and five petals rounded in shape, come in a multitude of colors and some are very fragrant.

The National Garden Bureau recently designated this year as the Year of the Pansy, a delicate looking flower that is "quite durable and a flower for all seasons," according to the bureau's Pansy Fact Sheet.

A plethora of pansies were on hand to greet visitors last week at the Lancaster Farm and Home Center. Many of the extension's Master Gardener graduates literally "pitched in" and helped festoon the outside of the Farm and Home Center building with the fragrant — and would you believe edible? — blooms.

Bruce Hellerick, extension agent, said the pansy is an underrated plant in many landscapes. "One of the things the Idea Garden is trying to foster is to show how

beautiful the pansy is and how useful it can be to any landscape," he said.

For many home gardeners, indeed, the challenge rests in trying to come up with the right color combinations. Single-colored pansies work best because they "have more impact, more bang for the buck, for their roadside recognition," said Hellerick.

He said that gardeners should choose the single color that best fits into the landscape.

If the gardener prefers fragrance over roadside eye appeal, then they should select the yellow or blue pansies, which seem to have the strongest scent, according to the fact sheet.

In general, according to the sheet, the history of the pansy is linked to the viola, its ancestor. The word pansy comes from the French "pensee," which means "thought or remembrance."

Pansy blooms are single with five petals that are rounded in shape. The flowers have one of three basic color patterns. Blooms can be a single, clear color, such as yellow or blue. A second pattern is a single color having black lines radiating from the center — these are called penciling and are similar to viola markings. The last type is

familiar to most home gardeners — the bloom has a dark center called a "face."

Colors include red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot, and mahogany. The plant itself is compact, not more than nine inches in both height and spread, and bears many stems. Varieties include large (3½ to 4½ inches), medium (2½ to 3½ inches), and multiflora (1½ to 2½ inches). Most are in series, including Crystal Bowl, Accord, Imperial, Majestic, Crown, Maximum, and Universal.

According to Hellerick, the pansies represent a test of hardiness conducted at the center. Transplants from four-inch pots, market packs (six plants in a pack), and bareroots were used. The four-inch pot transplants, because of their large root system, did the best, followed by the market packs, and lastly by the bareroot plants (many of which died).

Pansies are available most garden centers for up to \$2 for a six-pack.

In a few weeks, other new plants with the idea garden will come into bloom, according to Hellerick, including the Calendulas ("pot marigolds") and Dianthus (a single carnation-like flower).



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