

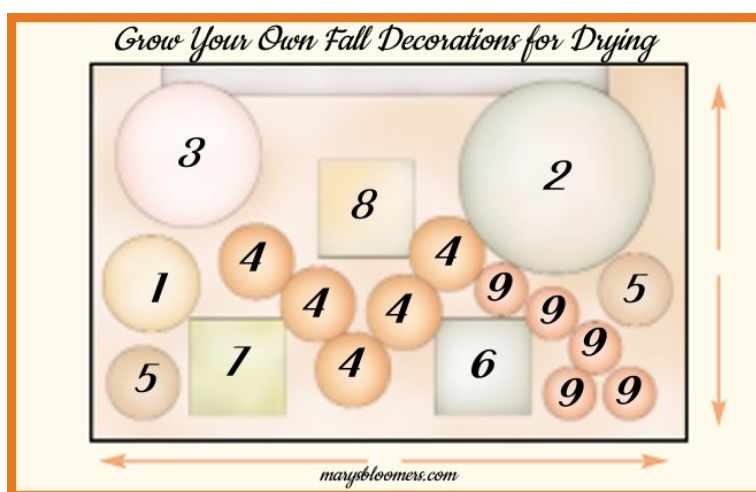
# Grow Your Own Autumn Decor Garden



Choose beautiful gourds, grasses and berries to dry or display for the Autumn season and Thanksgiving Holiday. Hydrangea and Cranberry shrubs are perennial, so are many ornamental grasses and shrubs with berries. Check the USDA cold hardiness map for perennial shrubs, and substitute with a similar variety as an alternative for those perennials, if you need to. Feel free to swap out varieties with those you love better, choosing those with similar heights/widths. Gourds and grasses come in many varieties and colors.

To start, sketch a garden plan for the garden size you'd like. For larger gardens, just multiply the plan and the plantings.

For a Perennial Autumn Colors Garden Design plan, [visit this page](#).



You can grow many or all of these in pots. Add stakes or a trellis in the pots for the "punkins".

Mobility is the bonus when you use pots and containers. If you're a compulsive garden decorator like me, they are a blessing. Plus, you can add a fall palette of colors in the garden with your choice of pots, and bring the smaller plants indoors for a quick fall living interior decor for gatherings before drying the plants. You can cut and dry the plumes of the grasses and berry branches, and still view the grasses in the garden.

Pick and dry your ornamental garden foliage/plume harvest using a dehydrator, or hang them upside-down somewhere, tied in bundles. Display the gourds naturally in bowls or wired onto wreaths. Leave them as they are and discard when they are no longer pretty.

I use bamboo stakes wherever I can to train and control vines. Bamboo naturally adds to the decor of your garden, and it's sustainable. There are also pre-made teepees and trellises available. Obelisks and small arches can also be used to train and grow your vines, and they are very decorative.

**Numbered Key To This Garden's Plantings as shown above**

I suggest a few alternatives below, that I would use in my garden's design. Many of the woody shrubs and grasses turn different shades of fall color at different times - cut a little at a time over the early and mid-fall season for a nice assortment of dried arrangement and decor color.

**1. Japanese silver grass** (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Adagio') 1 plant; 2 to 4 feet tall and as wide; fluffy silvery flower plumes rise 2 feet above a clump of fine grasslike foliage; coppery fall color.

**My alternative** - 1 Japanese Blood Grass - perennial Beautiful red, yellow and orange blades reminiscent of a sunset. Looks beautiful spring til freeze. Very pretty plumes in shades of purple for you to dry.

Plant in pots, as this grass will definitely spread by rhizomes. Many ornamental grasses can be invasive, if not contained. Mine looks beautiful in Asian-style pots. They would look great in bright orange, yellow or red pots, as well.

**Note:** after you harvest the plumes on any grasses that you want to dry, cut them off. Preferably, before you see the white "fluff" that contains seeds that the wind will disperse to your neighbors.

**2. European cranberry bush** (*Viburnum opulus* 'Compactum') 1 plant; 4 to 6 feet tall and wide; clusters of red berries in fall; white flowers in spring.

**My alternative would be**

Bittersweet vine on a trellis, Red or Orange Twig Dogwoods grown in pots or in-ground, and any shrub that produces berries in fall.



**3. Dwarf hydrangea** (*Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Forever Pink') 1 plant; 2 to 3 feet tall and as wide; 4-inch heads of pink flowers fade and dry beautifully; rounded shrub.

**Note:** You can easily preserve the hydrangeas by cutting long stems, bringing them indoors, and placing them in a vase of water to enjoy. Let the water evaporate, and the stems, leaves and flowers will dry nicely on their own. Like instant dried flower bouquets. They retain their colors once dry.

**My alternative would be:**

Sweetspire (Itea) "Little Henry" - A beautiful and fragrant native shrub that has large clusters of long, white, hanging flowers in spring, and turns a beautiful red in fall. Cut and dry the branches using your favorite method, or weave wreaths with the fresh branches. Very beautiful growth habit, and extremely fragrant blooms. Tip: weave wreaths for outdoor use, like for your front door and gates - They last a lot longer once cut and left to chill outside. The branches are pretty "bendy", so they're not hard to work with.

The sweet fragrance in spring is good enough reason to plant these in your gardens. Use some branches in a vase indoors - The reds are very beautiful mixed with other branches from woody plants. Keep suckering in check by cutting off any unwanted root shoots that pop up, or transplant the suckers in other places in your landscape.



**4. Chinese lantern** (*Physalis alkekengi*) 5 plants spaced 1 ½ feet apart; 1 to 2 feet tall; fruits are encased in bright orange, papery "lanterns" that dry well; can become invasive if not grown in pots. My mom had these and Chinese Silver Dollar plants in her front window bays, and every fall, she'd pick branches to dry for decorations.



**5. Fountain grass** (*Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln') 2 plants planted singly; 18 to 24 inches tall and wide; tan or coppery foxtail-like spikes of flowers above neat clumps of slender foliage.

**Alternatives** - There are many dwarf varieties of fountain grass, so choose one in a fall color you'll love.

*Mini Pumpkins and gourds - You can grow these ornamentals for drying and decor. Some varieties of gourds are also tasty.*

**6. Pumpkin 'Baby Boo'** 3 plants spaced equally around a 2-foot-wide tepee base; vines will cover the structure; 3-inch white mini-pumpkins.

**7. Pumpkin 'Jack Be Little'** 3 plants spaced equally around 2-foot-wide tepee base; vines will cover the structure; 3-inch bright yellow mini-pumpkins.

**8. Gourd-Small Fancy Gourds Mix** 3 plants spaced equally around 2-foot-wide tepee base; mixture of green, orange, yellow and striped mini-gourds in assorted shapes and sizes.

**9. Ornamental pepper** (*Capsicum annuum* 'Fiesta') 5 plants spaced 12 inches apart; 12 to 15 inches tall and as wide; edible 2-inch-long fruits.

**Optional - Pretty ornamental plants to add in, and around this garden, if you wish (use pots for taller plants).**

Tall and short perennials are great for the edges and borders of the garden, or as a backdrop. They will return to outline your autumn decor garden every year. Annuals can be planted every spring, and some can be brought indoors.

Grow Butterfly Weed in pots, as they will seed and spread. Butterfly Weed is essential to our *Monarch Butterfly's survival*, and other pollinators love it. Remove blooms before it can go to seed. Grow dwarf nasturtiums in pots. They can also spread by seed. Use Nasturtium flowers in your salads - they add a peppery taste. Nasturtiums will also repel aphids and other pests from the garden.



sources and resources

Design Plan Illustration, Michelle Buchard  
Original design planting list Country Living  
Article, Numbered key graphic, re-design of, and  
additions to the garden plan- marysbloomers.com  
Photos: Mary Hyland and Monrovia

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