

Geranium 'Rozanne' is Perennial Plant of the Year

Martha Smith, horticulture educator

The Perennial Plant Association has named Geranium 'Rozanne' the 2008 Perennial Plant of the Year. Large, jewel-tone, violet-blue flowers combined with deep green, lightly marbled foliage and an extended season of interest make Geranium 'Rozanne' a "must-have" for any garden.

Donald and Rozanne Waterer discovered this strong performer in their garden in 1989. Growing 20 inches tall with a mounding spread of 24 to 30 inches, it caught their eye with a bloom time from late spring through fall. Iridescent 2½-inch violet-blue, cup-shaped flowers with purple-violet veins and radiant white centers adorn the plant all summer.

Another plus is that the dark green foliage, which is finely cut and lightly variegated with chartreuse, turns red in autumn for stunning impact. It thrives in full sun to partial shade in moist, well-draining soil.

A hardy plant for Illinois gardens with no known insect or disease pests, it also tolerates heat and drought. In southern gardens, afternoon shade is advised to keep 'Rozanne' looking its best. Another tip to maintain peak appearance is to shear back old foliage to 3 inches in late July or early August to promote new growth.

Use 'Rozanne' as a groundcover or as an attractive specimen plant for the front of



photo credit: Steven Still/Perennial Plant Association

the border. Everything looks good against 'Rozanne.' For summer violet/pink combinations, try *Salvia nemorosa* 'Rose Queen' or 'Pink Friesland,' or *Veronica spicata* 'Tickled Pink.' Anything yellow will contrast well with 'Rozanne.' Pair it with the soft yellow blooms of the 2001 Perennial Plant of the Year, *Coreopsis* 'Monbeam' or against a yellow foliage hosta such as 'Sunpower.'

Rozanne is a nice filler between daylilies or garden phlox or shrub roses. Simply let it weave in and out of the landscape to provide an informal, carefree look to a garden, adding splashes of violet-blue throughout. Don't forget containers and window boxes where 'Rozanne' will cascade nicely.

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EXTENSION

When Ice and Snow Cause Damage

David Robson, horticulture educator



Trees and shrubs are prone to injury throughout the year. But, a heavy snow or ice storm may bend branches to the point that you think something should be done.

Sometimes, the best thing is to do nothing. Branches naturally bend under the weight of ice and snow. Anyone who has swung on a limb or pulled it down to pick an apple realizes the elasticity of limbs.

But, bend a branch back too far and it breaks. Weak-wooden trees such as poplar, Siberian elm, willows, and silver maple suffer the most breakage during heavy snows or ice. Fast-growing trees including birches are also vulnerable. Similarly, trees with rot, decay, weak crotch angles (many of the ornamental pears), or V-shaped crotches (again, silver maples) easily split in severe weather.

Most heavy, wet snows don't accumulate to a sufficient degree to cause damage to single-trunk deciduous trees and shrubs. The problem usually occurs with multi-stemmed plants and evergreens.

Ice alone, or coupled with the snow's weight, can cause problems.

Old stems are more prone to injury than younger ones, much like people and bones. The thicker the bark, the less likely the limb will bend.

Evergreens also suffer under ice and heavy snowfall due to the increased surface area of the plant. Needles capture every flake or ice crystal. Broadleaf evergreens such as rhododendron, boxwood, and holly also have large leaf areas to capture ice and snow, increasing the weight load.

Some shade trees that retain seed pods (sweetgums) or leaves (many oaks) are prone to injury, although these two trees have stronger branch angles and wood. The same amount of snow may bend or break evergreen branches yet cause no damage on a leafless shade tree.

WHAT TO DO

Don't run out to brush away the snow with a broom or stick. This may cause more pressure on a limb and cause it to break. Your best option is to wait until the snow or ice melts. Many branches will return to their original position a couple of days after the snow or ice melts.

If branches have been bent out of shape, they can be propped or tied to higher branches now or in the spring before new growth appears. Within a month or two, the limb should be set, and you can remove the anchors or props. Evergreens may need to be pulled and anchored in the early spring as growth starts. However, do it carefully. If you pull too much and too fast, you can snap the top out.

Limbs that are broken or damaged by ice or snow should be carefully inspected before pruning or removal.

Realize that it's not important to remove branches at the moment unless they pose a hazard. While damaged branches may look bad, they aren't putting additional stress on the plant. Insects and diseases will not attack the plant during the winter months.

Most importantly, ask yourself if the tree or shrub is worth saving. If damage is severe, it might be better to replace the plant with a higher-quality tree or shrub.

If you want to attempt to save the plant, decide whether the work can be done from the ground with your pruners, saws, and loppers. If you need a ladder to climb into the tree, it might be best to call a professional. Certified arborists (www.isa-arbor.org) are trained to do what's best for the tree, and they can do work throughout the winter months. Make sure any person you hire is either insured or bonded. Insurance and bonding certificates should be current and presented upon demand. This protects you from recourse if something happens during the pruning process.

Question Corner

Answers provided by Elizabeth Wahle, horticulture specialist

Q. I'm thinking about trying heirloom vegetables in my garden this year. What makes a plant an heirloom and is there anything special I need to know?

A. Many think of an heirloom vegetable as an old cultivar that has been passed down from generation to generation. But a more general definition of an heirloom vegetable could simply be an old cultivar that is open-pollinated.

Just how far back would a vegetable cultivar have to trace its ancestry to qualify as an heirloom? One defining time period could be the early 1950s when modern-day plant breeders introduced the first hybrids developed from inbred lines. Most cultivars in the heirloom category trace their ancestry prior to this time period. And, although there have been several open-pollinated cultivars developed after this time period, later cultivars in general are not considered heirlooms—yet.

Most heirloom vegetables are open-pollinated, meaning that a particular cultivar can be grown from seed and will reproduce seed that will look just like the parent, or “true-to-type.” The term open-pollinated encompasses both self-fertilizing and cross-fertilizing crops. Flowers of self-fertilizing crops are fertilized by pollen from the same flower, and the resultant seed will produce 90 percent or more of offspring that are true-to-type. Examples of vegetable crops that are self-fertilizing are lettuce, beans, peas, and tomatoes.

With a cross-pollinated crop, the flower is fertilized from pollen of another flower. This could be between plants of the same species, or between individuals of different species. To produce true-to-type seed from cross-fertilizing crops, the grower would need to isolate the plant or the flowers in order to avoid off-type seed production.

Examples of cross-fertilized vegetables are spinach, beets, carrots, sweet corn, cole crops, and cucurbits.

Heirloom vegetable crops that are vegetatively propagated are an exception to the open-pollinated portion of the definition. Crops like potatoes, garlic, and asparagus are examples of vegetable crops that are maintained through vegetative propagation, even though they may have at first been maintained from seed.

If you want to grow heirloom vegetables, below is a short list of seed suppliers and seed-saving networks and organizations.

AbuLife—Abundant Life Seed Foundation
P.O. Box 772
Port Townsend, WA 98368
360-385-5660
(seed-saving organization)

Butterbrooke Farm
78 Barry Road
Oxford CT 06478-1529
203-888-2000
(seed-saving organization)

Seed Savers Exchange
3076 North Winn Road
Decorah IA 52101
319-382-5990
(seed-saving organization)

Underwood Gardens, Ltd.
4N381 Maple Avenue
Bensenville, IL 60106
630-616-0268

Heirloom Seeds
P.O. Box 245
West Elizabeth, PA 15088-0245
412-384-7816

Heritage Seed Co.
HC78 Box 187
Star City, AR 71667



Send your lawn and garden questions to:

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U of I Extension
4202 Williamson Place
Suite 2
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864

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Take Your Love of Gardening to a New Level...Become a Master Gardener



Have you ever considered becoming a U of I Extension Master Gardener? Volunteer Master Gardeners are adults of all ages who love gardening or landscaping. You can become a Master Gardener if . . .

- you have some knowledge or experience in gardening or landscape management (you need not be an expert)
- you are willing to learn about horticulture and share this knowledge with others
- you are accepted into the Master Gardener training program and can volunteer time conducting horticulture programs coordinated through your local Extension office

Training sessions get underway January 15 and run through mid-April. All sessions run from 9 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. In the Edwardsville area, the training is offered on Tuesdays. The training is offered in Effingham on Wednesdays. And on Thursdays, the training will be held in Marion or Murphysboro (to be determined).

Contact your local Extension office for more details about the 2008 Master Gardener training program.



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