



5 flowering shrubs to plant now

By NANCY BRACHEY
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It is now, 100 percent, no-doubt-about-it fall. And that means prime time for planting the flowering shrubs you admired through the spring and summer.

The air is cool, the soil is soft and damp and garden centers are stocked. Once planted, the roots will have many months to develop and settle down in their new spot before warm weather. Choices seem endless, but some rise above all others. Here are my top five.

Encore azaleas

Long a Piedmont favorite, azaleas raised their status even more with the introduction of this category of repeat-flowering azaleas. With four new introductions this fall, the number of varieties is up to 25. Colors include white, pink, coral, orange, purple and red. Some are short enough for small beds or foundation plantings in shade; others can reach 4 feet to make an evergreen screen. The biggest flush of flowers is in midspring. There may be a small flush of new flowers in summer, but the best repeating is in autumn. Since these fall flowers open as the days grow cooler, blooms tend to last weeks instead of days.



Butterfly bush

Many choices are out there, bearing flowers of purple, pink, white or yellow. This plant requires sun and space. Some choices rise 6 feet, which makes it a good background plant for a large flower bed or the corner of a tall house. Annual pruning in late winter will keep it shapely. The bush loses most of its foliage in the winter, but doesn't look terrible. You get fresh new foliage every spring, before the flowers appear to entice the butterflies.

Endless Summer hydrangea

There has never been a better time for hydrangeas than now, with many new ones in the marketplace offering style and beauty. In our acidic soil, the flower color is an exceptional sky blue; in more alkaline soil, it would be pink. What keeps the show going is the plant's ability to bloom on both old and new wood. The shrub is shapely, growing 3 to 5 feet. It does best in part shade. The combination of a stretch of Endless Summer hydrangeas with a background of trees that allow sunlight to filter through is beautiful. If you prefer white, consider Blushing Bride.



Camellias

The best evergreen shrubs for a shady Piedmont landscape, camellias arrive with many advantages: exquisite flowers, glossy green foliage, and shapely plants. This is not a category of limited choices. Choose the Camellia sasanqua for beautiful flowers in the fall and early winter. The even more diverse Camellia japonica can be chosen from varieties that bloom between January and March. Some, such as old favorites Lady Clare and Professor Sargent, tend to bloom continuously from early winter to early spring, providing the weather doesn't go Arctic. Check the mature height on the label and plant with room to grow.

Daphne odora

Every landscape requires at least one shrub famed for fragrance. Daphne odora is a neat, small evergreen for shade to part-shade, rising slowly to only a few feet tall. The flowers open in clusters in mid-to-late winter with an intense sweet scent. This is not a plant to stick in the far corner of your landscape. Rather, place it by a door or walkway where you'll enjoy it. The most attractive winter daphnes are variegated ones with yellow margins around the leaves. Daphne requires careful planting to ensure excellent drainage and avoid root rot. Set the root ball so that much of it is above ground level, then cover with soil and lightweight mulch.



PHOTOS, FROM TOP: ENCORE AZALEAS, PROVEN WINNERS, ENDLESS SUMMER, MONROVIA.COM AND MCT

Ask a Designer

N&O DESIGN TEAM MEMBERS
OFFER SOLUTIONS TO READERS



COURTESY OF ANNETTE SWEETMAN

"It's been six years since we moved in and still the bonus room befuddles us," says Annette Sweetman of Raleigh.

Bonus room can serve 3 functions

It's been six years since we moved in, and still the bonus room befuddles us. At first glance, it seems like a basic square room with an alcove, but notice the six doors taking up the wall space. Four of the doors open into the room. These doors cause us grief for furniture placement.

First and foremost, we want a comfortable TV viewing area. We'd like to keep the 32-inch TV, stand and couch for now, but would consider a panel TV and sectional in a year or two. A great design may inspire my husband to spend the money for these updates sooner than later.

Second, we would like a hobby area. The alcove currently contains most of the hobby stuff. That area is often a mess and would need camouflage. Third, we would like a home office area.

We like modern/contemporary/simple design. The carpet is light blue, which is a bane to my decorating. I'd like a dark gray or putty or neutral wall color. Or different colors for different walls.

We have a shoestring budget and I'll probably do most of the work myself.

Annette Sweetman
Raleigh



Allen

We asked M.A. Allen of MA Allen Interiors in Raleigh to tackle this design dilemma. She and her colleague Breanne Lutz collaborated and Allen writes:

This bonus room presents many challenges, but with a little creativity all your needs can be met. With six interior doors, windows, a sloped ceiling and the need to meet various uses, it took some thought to design a floor plan that could meet your functional needs and still be attractive. Here are several tips for transforming your bonus room into a highly functional and aesthetically pleasing space that includes an entertainment zone, craft area and home office.



YOUNGER

An L-shaped sectional with a cocktail ottoman provides more seating and visually carves out a zone for TV viewing and conversation.

Seating area: Say goodbye to your sofa and invest in a sectional. An L-shaped sectional would provide more seating and visually carve out a zone for TV viewing and conversation. A cocktail ottoman would add to the comfort. An area rug would help to ground this area and can draw attention away from the wall-to-wall carpeting you are not wild about. With this popular layered look, a flat woven rug would keep from adding too much bulk underfoot. Place the TV on top of your white window-pane chest for an attractive and functional entertainment cabinet.

Inside

The bonus room's new plan and palette. **4D**

Vine is pretty, but don't let it invade

Born to run, run, run

I have a vine growing out of one of my holly bushes that suddenly bloomed last month. The flowers were white and small, and they were fragrant. They looked like little four-pointed stars. I didn't plant it. It just magically showed up. Do you know what it might be?

Doris Sullivan
Durham

Let me introduce you to sweet autumn clematis (*Clematis terniflora*). This vine is quite a crawler – it can easily reach up to 30 feet in length. Ditch banks, ugly fences, retaining walls can quickly be



Ask the Gardener
L.A. Jackson

come awash in the pretty green wave that is sweet autumn clematis. And as its name implies, the vine summer gives way to autumn, the vine explodes in a shower of small white flowers that have a sweet-ish fragrance. I added the "ish" because it is a weird sweetness that I don't much like.

So is this an ideal vine for area landscapes? Well, if you want to quickly cover up a rusty old Buick in the backyard, yeah, it is. Although this perennial can be

found for sale as an ornamental vine, I can't give it a two-green-thumbs-up endorsement because this introduction from Japan is considered an invasive exotic in much of the Southeast. In other words, if a neighbor has it, you'll likely get it – which is probably how the vine "magically" popped out of that holly bush.

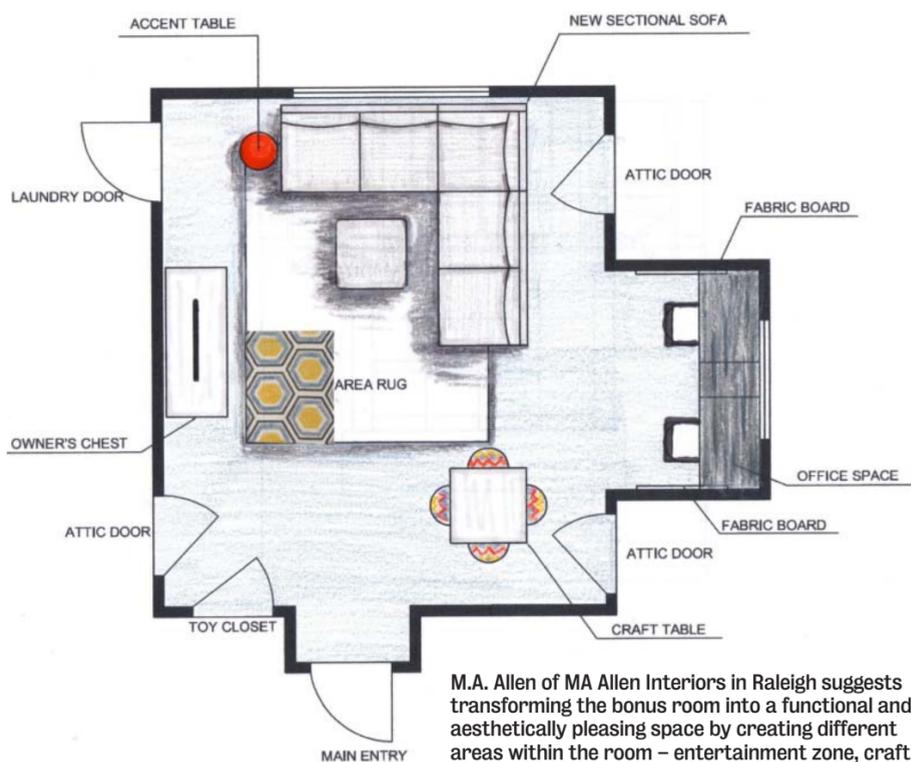
If you would like to take your chances with sweet autumn clematis, but don't want neighbors storming your gates because the plant spread to their yards, prune the vine back as the flowers begin to fade, making sure to include all spent blooms.

SEE VINE, PAGE 3D



Sweet autumn clematis climbs and crawls.

Ask a Designer

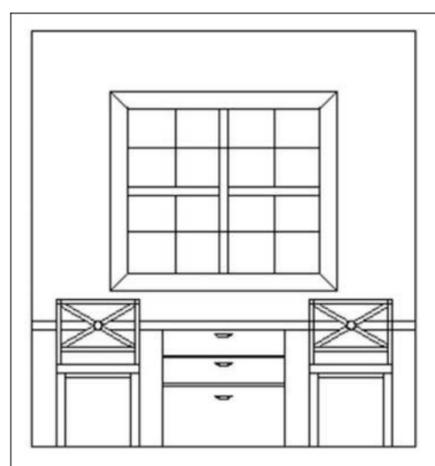


M.A. Allen of MA Allen Interiors in Raleigh suggests transforming the bonus room into a functional and aesthetically pleasing space by creating different areas within the room – entertainment zone, craft area and home office.

COURTESY OF M.A. ALLEN

Alcove: A major benefit to your space is the alcove, which gives the feel of a room within a room. We suggest you showcase this space instead of blocking it off and create an organized home office that can double as a hobby area. For a semi-custom desk, have a laminate countertop made to span the full 88 inches and buy a pair of inexpensive drawer units to center below the top. The drawer units would divide the space into two equal work stations below the window and allow craft and office supplies to be neatly tucked away. A pair of matching chairs would help unify the work-space.

Add fabric-covered bulletin boards on each side or a combination of tack-and-dry erase surfaces to fit your organizational needs.



COURTESY OF M.A. ALLEN

For a desk, have a laminate countertop made and put drawer units below it.



COURTESY OF BOB HUFFMAN
An ottoman would comfortably fit within the alcove space.

Hobby area: In addition to the storage and work surface provided in the alcove, a craft table with cube ottoman seating would fit comfortably within the space. A table with a storage base below would be best.

The palette: Paint all walls, including the sloped areas, in Benjamin Moore Deep Silver. This color would work well with the light blue carpeting and give an up-to-date feel. To draw attention away from the secondary doors in the space, paint these attic doors and casing in the wall color. They will disappear! With gray walls and pale blue carpet, pops of yellow and red-orange would add a youthful and modern vibe.

MA ALLEN INTERIORS, RALEIGH. MAALLENINTERIORS.COM, 919-699-3131

Ask a Designer

Do you have a room that defies your every attempt to decorate it? Send us a photo or two of the space, along with a letter describing your design dilemma and the look you want to achieve. Members of the volunteer N&O Design Team will offer solutions to selected problems in Home & Garden.

Send email to forhomeandgarden@newsobserver.com. Subject line: "Ask a Designer." Be sure to include your name, town and contact information. Due to the volume of email, we cannot provide individual replies.

Note: If you send us a question, you're giving us permission to publish your information.

Living Spaces

Get ready for your holiday houseguests

By KATHRYN WEBER
Tribune Media Services

When you welcome visitors with flair, both host and guest enjoy their time together even more.

Take stock: Buy some travel-size toothpastes, extra toothbrushes and dental floss for guests. While you're at it, grab a handful of wash puffs, razors and an extra comb or brush. Guests will appreciate your thoughtfulness. Have an extra blow dryer? Add it to the guest bathroom for visitors who forget to bring one.

Give them permission: Place a small framed note on the bathroom counter saying, "Be Our Guest" and instructing visitors to help themselves to any products they need. If your visitor shares a bathroom with you, leave a basket of small travel toiletries (bath gel, toothpaste, shampoo/conditioner, lotion, swabs, a razor, etc.) in the guest bedroom.

Bedroom basics: In your guest room, include a comforter and a light-weight blanket. Take a cue from bed-and-breakfasts; place a light-weight blanket under the comforter or duvet. When making the bed, put the flat sheet's finished side facing the mattress. Next, pull the sheet and blanket all the way up and then fold back to one third. Now the finished side of the sheet is facing up.



KATHRYN WEBER

Put out travel toiletries to make visitors feel at home.

Place the comforter, folded neatly in half, at the foot of the bed. Arrange sham pillows against the headboard. Include two pillows per person. European square shams are also nice for guests who like to read in bed.

Thoughtful touches: Luggage racks are inexpensive (under \$30) and will also come in handy when you're packing for a trip of your own. Add a small bowl for jewelry or change on the nightstand, plus a notepad and pen, a nice tube of hand cream, and a few magazines.

Have an extra bathrobe? Hang it in the closet for your guests. If there's room, a tray with tea and coffee cups and a hot water kettle is a nice touch. Don't forget an alarm clock with an MP3 plug or docking station. Lastly, add a nightlight with an on/off switch in the bedroom and guest bath.

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Six Forks Station	
ARGO (R)	1:15-4:00-7:20-9:50
HERE COMES THE BOOM (PG)	12:35-2:50-5:00-7:15-9:35
FRANKENWEENIE (PG)	12:45-2:45-4:45-7:15-9:30
TAKEN 2 (PG-13)	1:00-3:00-5:00-7:25-9:40
*HOTEL TRANSYLVANIA (PG)	12:50-3:00-5:00-7:10-9:25
*LOOPER (R)	1:10-4:10-7:20-9:45
STARTS 10/26/12 "CLOUD ATLAS" (R)	
Mission Valley	
ARGO (R)	1:15-4:00-7:10-9:40
FRANKENWEENIE (PG)	12:45-2:45-4:45-7:15-9:35
TAKEN 2 (PG-13)	1:00-3:00-5:00-7:25-9:40
PITCH PERFECT (PG-13)	1:10-4:15-7:20-9:45
*LOOPER (R)	1:30-4:10-7:30-10:00
THURSDAY "PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 4" (R)	
SHOWS 9:00 PM & 11:00 PM	
Rialto	
THE MASTER	1:30-4:30-7:30
The Colony	
PERKS OF BEING A WALLFLOWER	2:15-4:30-7:15-9:30
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*Here Comes the Boom (PG)	10:30 11:15 2:00 4:00 4:45 6:35 7:30 10:20
*Argo (R)	10:45 1:00 1:45 4:35 7:25 9:10 10:10
*Seven Psychopaths (R)	10:55 1:30 4:20 7:15 10:10
*Sinister (R)	11:45 2:10 5:00 7:35 10:30
*Atlas Shrugged Part 2 (PG-13)	10:30 1:15 4:00 6:50 9:40
*Taken 2 (PG-13)	10:30 1:15 4:00 6:50 9:30
*Frankenweenie (in RealD 3D) (PG)	11:25 4:15
*Taken 2 (PG-13)	10:45 1:00 3:45 6:05 8:55
*Frankenweenie (in 2D) (PG)	1:35 6:35
*Frankenweenie (in RealD 3D) (PG)	11:25 4:15
*The Perks of Being a Wallflower (PG-13)	11:05 1:45 4:45 7:30 10:00
Looper (R)	11:35 3:15 6:35 7:45 9:20
Hotel Transylvania (in 2D) (PG)	10:35 12:50 3:15 6:15 8:45
Hotel Transylvania (in RealD 3D) (PG)	11:20 1:50 4:30
Pitch Perfect (PG-13)	10:40 1:15 4:00 6:50 9:45
The Master (R)	11:30 3:00 6:05 9:20
End of Watch (R)	10:30pm
House at the End of the Street (PG-13)	7:00 9:45
Finding Nemo (in RealD 3D) (G)	11:00am
Movie Schedule for Saturday 10/13 ONLY!	