

# From the garden



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I remember when HGTV (Home and Garden Television) had garden shows. I loved watching the weekend makeovers, reveled in the tours of international gardens and positively drooled over the perfect vegetables picked from perfect vegetable gardens. And then the home designers took over. Apparently in this age of 'greening the planet' plants were exchanged for paint and wallpaper.

And so we have the story of spring as told in home designer lingo. I took my Benjamin Moore paint chips into

the garden to discover where the designers get their inspiration in the fervent hope that I could make sense

of the whole movement.

My first colour was the spring green of a newly-emerging magnolia leaf (*Magnolia stellata*). The many petalled, fragrant flowers are a nice crisp white; I'll call it 'White Linen'. The species of this plant is quite hardy and grows into a bushy shrub or small tree. The buds which fatten up in very early spring, appear silky and the bark can be fragrant when the plant is young.

A slightly different green that appears on a later spring-blooming plant demonstrates designer 'soft sage'. The *Fritillaria hermonis amana* (not positive about the name as it came to me as *F. amoena*) has the most wonderful bell-shaped flowers which have a hint of that checkerboard marking common in the family. The 'soft sage' green is the perfect contrast to the flecks of maroon. This bulb hails from Turkey, Syria and Lebanon and likes good drainage of its homeland. You have to be careful when purchasing these bulbs as wild collecting is making them quite rare. The

# Designers Call It Spring Green

later fritillarias are equally intriguing, but are stronger colours.

*Helleborus foetidus*, the stinking hellebore, sports the same 'soft sage' green but I have mixed luck keeping it alive. I have much better luck with its cousin, *Helleborus orientalis* commonly called the Lenten rose. This plant is experiencing a surge in popularity for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the drop in price. Only 10 years ago, a plant could cost as much as \$30 and now you pay that only for the special cultivars, the species going for an affordable \$7 or \$8!

I have likely recommended this plant to you before as it settles in well under the canopy of a maple where the soil is quite dry. The Lenten rose self seeds when it is happy and I have several sports that are soft pink (designer speak—'oyster shell pink'), medium pink (early sunset) and dark pink (lip stick glow).

Hellebores need their foliage cut down early in the



*Magnolia stellata*



*Fritillaria amoena*



*Helleborus foetidus*



*Cornus mas*



*Forsythia*

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