

Alliums, ornamental onions, can add spice to garden

By **MARJORIE MASON HOGUE**
Correspondent

When I visited England last summer I met Dilys Davies, author of the book *Alliums - Ornamental Onions*. The edible allium onions, garlic, leeks and chives have been grown for thousands of years.

The ornamental alliums are now becoming a popular addition to our flower gardens. They are easily grown by planting the bulbs in the autumn as you would tulips. Bulb size varies from a large pea to a baseball and the resulting plants range from five inches to five feet. Most prefer a location in full sun with well-drained soil. Some make good cutflowers (only a few small oniony) while others produce excellent seed heads for dried bouquets. The foliage of some varieties will have withered by bloom time so

they should be positioned with other plants that will camouflage this shortcoming. Bloom time is generally late spring through early summer. While Dilys discusses several hundred different alliums in her book, there are only a few which are readily available.

A. albopilosum (*A. christophii*) is one of the most exciting for flower arrangers. Huge 8"-10" heads of bluish-violet blooms are borne atop 15" stems. *A. atropurpureum* has much smaller flower

heads - only 2"-3" but of an intense maroon purple. These 2 1/2' plants combined well with pink oriental poppies in my garden last spring.

By far the most unusual allium is *bulgaricum* (you may see this referred to by its new classification, *Nectaroscordum*). The creamy white bells have green veins and burgundy-red patches. Before fertilization the bells hang down then afterwards they swing upright. This 3' plant prefers moist soil and is regular-

ly visited by hummingbirds. *A. astrowskianum* is another short allium with pink blooms suitable for the rock garden. One of the most popular alliums is *Purple Sensation*. Slender 36" stems are topped by heads of deep violet blooms. This allium combined with *Hemerocallis flava*, the fragrant lemon lily and the delicate white blooms of sweet cicely make a pleasing trio in my doorway garden.

Just as onions are used liberally in our cooking so we should

use the ornamental onions in our gardens.

Thank you to everyone who sent letters with questions or comments for our bulb draw. The winter of the Box of Bulbs from the Netherlands Flowerbulb Information Centre will be announced in next week's column. Continue to send your gardening questions or comments to: Let's Get Growing, c/o The Tribune, 88 Brock St., Uxbridge, Ont., L9P 1R4. Attn: Marjorie Mason Hogue.

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ADVERTISING CORRECTION
Eaton's FALL DEALS insert, appearing in this newspaper on Wednesday, September 27, 1995. Please note the following: Page 4 - Copy describing Vanity Fair selection should read: "Only at Eaton's. Stock up on silky sheer, support pantyhose." Pages 11 - Copy for shoes at top of the page was reversed. Florsheim shoes are on left and Birkdale shoes are on the right side. Due to supplier's delivery problems, the following items will be available Wednesday, October 4: Page 13 - Cotton thermal crews (girl's S to XL sizes) 12.99 each or 2 for 19.98; Page 16 - Girl's small and large sizes fleece sets 14.99 and 19.99 each. Inadvertently, the error listed appeared in our advertising. We sincerely regret any inconvenience or confusion to our customers.

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