Dimileth Garden Gala: Fall Harvest

Many of us have heard of flower language, but finding good, reliable information on it can be hard sometimes, especially if you want to explore options outside of the Victorian era or your traditional flower garden! Well, fear not! This document is here to offer suggestions and resources, both for well known and more obscure flora.

Acorn & Oak

Life and immortality, strength, endurance, wisdom, protection, majesty



Sometimes called the “King of Forest Trees”, these hardy, long-lived trees and their fruit are sacred to many European cultures, particularly Nordic, Celtic, Baltic, and Slavic. The oak is most often associated with deities of storms, and when you consider that they’re struck by lightning more often than other trees of the same height, it’s no wonder why. Particularly large, old trees were blessed and marked with religious symbols and became places of worship and celebration, especially in villages without a church.

Aster

Daintiness, contentment, talisman of love



A fall-blooming herb with daisy-like flowers. Named after the Greek word for "star" due to its blooms resembling a star, asters also symbolize love, wisdom, faith, and color. It conveys deep emotional love and affection for someone you care for. According to Greek mythology, these flowers were born from the tears of the goddess Astraea, who had turned herself into a star to escape the waters that the god Jupiter had sent to cover the world. When the flood receded, she looked down from her place in the heavens and wept for all the lives lost, and wherever her tears fell to earth, star-shaped flowers bloomed.

Chrysanthemum
Optimism, long life, fidelity, joy



Year after year, these flowers regrow and bloom throughout autumn, and have become a symbol of the season across much of the world. They are particularly beloved in China, where they've been cultivated for medicine and ornamentation for thousands of years and are frequently depicted in art and poetry as one of the Four Gentlemen. It's a tradition to drink either chrysanthemum wine or tea on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, as it's believed that this will bless the individual with a long, healthy life.

Corn
Sustenance, staff of life, fertility



Corn is an important symbol in many Native American tribes. It is an inherent part of many tribes' cultures and spiritual symbolism. For example, to the Ojibwe, corn has great spiritual meaning linking bodies and the land through the myths of Mandaamin, the spirit of the corn. Corn was also a sacred plant to the Navajo. The Navajo creation story says they were created from an ear of corn and the skin of Changing Woman, their most important deity. To many tribes, corn is not only their most valuable crop, but a way of life.

Cotoneaster
"I will always love you, even through the winters."



An evergreen rosacea that has orange berries. Cotoneasters are common ornamental shrubs in gardens, especially due to their attractive flowers and fruits. The flowers also provide nectar for bees, and the berries attract songbirds. The name *Cotoneaster* comes from the Latin word for the quince plant, "cotoneum," and the suffix meaning "resembling." However, even as delicious as they are to animals, the berries of this plant are not considered edible to humans, and can in fact be toxic in large quantities.

Crabapple
Love and marriage



Crabapple trees exhibit lovely small red fruits during the fall which keep through the winter. Crabapple blossoms are associated with love, marriage, and fertility. Its flowers are also symbolic of youth, surprise, and joy. There's a traditional belief that if you throw a crabapple seed into the fire while saying your special someone's name, it's true love if the seed explodes. The Celts often burned apple wood in ceremonial fertility rites and rituals. They also called the crabapple tree "The Tree of Love".

Cranberry
Cure for heartache



Cranberries are said to be a cure for heartache. This is possibly a reference to their Pequot Indian name, *ibimi*, or "bitter berry" because ripe cranberries are more acidic than sweet. The belief can also stem from their "heart-red" dye or their healing properties. When raw, they have an astringent effect that reduces bleeding, and this was taken full advantage of by the native peoples of North America. Cranberries were used in medicinal poultices for wound care, as well as in medicine for other ailments, such as digestive issues and various respiratory illnesses. They were also often an ingredient in pemmican, a high-calorie food made of dried meat, tallow, and dried berries that could be eaten as is or cooked into stew alongside fresh ingredients.

Dogwood
Rebirth, renewal, purity, strength, resilience



The dogwood tree is most often associated with early spring because of the lovely floral display it provides. However, this tree also shines in autumn with its bright red leaves and red berries. Its berries can be used to germinate new trees. Very few trees stand out as much in the autumn as a dogwood tree. It rivals maples in that regard.

Dogwood flowers have several symbolic meanings including rebirth. They also represent qualities like durability, strength, reliability, and resilience. This can be attributed to flowering dogwood's exceptionally hard, strong wood, an attribute that it does not lose in autumn.

Goldenrod

Encouragement, be cautious, protection



Goldenrods are wildflowers that showcase gold to yellow blossoms, and are often associated with the sun because of their color. The flower also means good luck and sincerity. It's also believed that the blooms from this wildflower can relieve depression. Interestingly, the Cherokee people of North America have a tale about this plant.

Long ago, two tribes were at war, each seeking larger hunting grounds. This conflict destroyed villages and killed many, resulting in two sisters fleeing into the woods, one wearing a dress dyed golden yellow and the other dyed lavender blue. One night, a medicine woman divined that the sisters would be hunted down, so to protect them, she sprinkled them with a secret mixture of herbs and water and hid them in the forest leaves.

The next morning, the sisters were gone. But in their place, blooming where they had slept, were two flowers. A goldenrod and an aster.

Hawthorn

Hope, love and marriage, banishing strife, protection, overcoming harshness



These beautiful flowering trees have long been valued for a great number of reasons. Their flowers, leaves, and fruit are all edible, incredibly nutritious, and useful in folk medicine, and their wood is strong and sturdy, making it excellent for use in constructing homes and tools. And speaking of homes, it's said that hawthorns are a favorite dwelling of fairies.

To disturb one of these Fairy Trees without permission was to bring terrible misfortune upon yourself and your kin… but favor and blessings could be found, too. In particular, brides were allowed to collect blossoms to wear in their hair and include in their bouquet, to represent their new loving union and bring blessings upon their marriage.

Hyssop
Cleanliness, purification, renewal, sacrifice



Much of hyssop's meaning and significance comes from its role in biblical and Hebrew text. There, it is listed as an integral component to a ceremony for cleansing those who have come into contact with lepers, and King David himself makes mention of the herb's purifying properties in Psalms 51:10. "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean", he cried, pleading with God to forgive him of his sins (adultery and murder, for those who are curious).

It's also said that sprigs of this bitter herb are what the Hebrews used to paint the blood of the sacrificial lamb over their doors, protecting them from the final plague of Egypt.

Japanese Maple
Love, retirement, rest, peace, patience



When autumn comes, these trees blanket Japan in a vibrant tapestry of red, orange, and gold, drawing thousands upon thousands to come and witness the sight. To some, this annual viewing of the changing leaves is a spiritual event, as, according to Shinto beliefs, all spirits call nature their home. A quiet, contemplative walk through the maples is a perfect way to connect with the world around them and the spirits that reside there.

Katsura Tree
Joining of the earth and sky



The Katsura is a strange, lovely tree, smelling of candy and caramel when it begins to drop its leaves in fall. It is also associated with the divine. Some Japanese legends tell of gods arriving from the heavens in these trees, and others tell of a beautiful man who lives on the moon, punished by the gods to forever trim a magical Katsura tree that shadows the lunar surface. It's said that if you stare up at him for too long, he may beckon to you, asking you to join him, and every time he beckons, he steals away some of your life.

Pumpkin
Abundance, prosperity, good fortune



Traditional orange pumpkins are associated with the fall season and the bounty of the harvest. However, they have other associations as well. During Halloween night, carved or painted pumpkins are a common decoration in homes, both for fun and as a way to ward off evil spirits. However, white pumpkins are a sign of new beginnings and are often used in Halloween decorations as a symbol of ghosts and spirits.

And of course, pumpkins are extremely versatile in the kitchen. The flowers and leaves can be stuffed, fried, or boiled, and the pumpkin flesh can be eaten in any number of ways, both savory and sweet. Soups, pies, pastries, cakes, stews, breads; you name it, and a pumpkin can be used for it. Even the seeds can be roasted into a delicious snack!

That's not all! Pumpkins are a source of competition! Across the world, people use all sorts of methods to grow the grandest, most gargantuan gourds. The current world record for the heaviest pumpkin is 1,226 kg (2,703 lb).

Rutabaga
Help will come for you (flowers), protection from evil



Rutabagas (Swedish turnips, swedes) have long been an important crop for those who must endure long winters. The nutritious roots are easy to store and keep for months, and the greens can be eaten raw or cooked, both by people and livestock. In parts of the British Isles, these vegetables were carved with faces and turned into lanterns to ward away evil spirits, particularly around the time we now call Halloween. Yes, these were the original Jack-o'-lanterns!

Sunflower
Adoration, loyalty, bringer of joy



The bright color of these large blooms invokes thoughts of the sun and puts a smile on almost anyone's face. This has been disproven but for a long time, it was believed that sunflowers would turn throughout the day to always face the sun. However, what has *been* proven is that sunflowers are very good at cleaning up nuclear waste.

After the Chernobyl disaster, a platform growing sunflowers was floated onto one of the contaminated ponds, and as the flowers grew, they removed a remarkable amount of caesium-137 and strontium-90 from the water. These

flowers were later able to be harvested and safely disposed of, and sunflowers have since been used in the cleanup of other nuclear disasters. They are now a symbol of nuclear disarmament and future peace, and are the national flower of Ukraine.

Wheat

Wealth and prosperity, fertility, continuation of life



For as long as humanity has had agriculture, we have grown grain. Wheat was among the first, with evidence of cultivation as early as 9600 BCE. From wheat, mankind created bread, beer, and more, and from this relatively stable abundance sprang settled communities, which led to commerce and trade, and eventually to the rise of civilization as we know it. Across countless cultures of Europe and the Middle East, deities of harvest, fertility, and prosperity were worshiped and depicted with wheat and other grains in their hands and on their altars.

Yarrow

Health and healing, cure for heartache and sorrow, divination



This flowering herb is probably most widely known for its use as medicine, and for good reason. Yarrow's astringent properties make it excellent for slowing the flow of blood, such as from wounds or nosebleeds. However, in the county of Suffolk in England, leaves from this plant were used to *induce* a nosebleed! To find out if your beloved fancied you back, you were supposed to place a yarrow leaf up your nostril and recite this rhyme:

Green 'arrow, green 'arrow, you bears a white blow,
If my love love me, my nose will bleed now;
If my love don't love me, it 'on't bleed a drop,
If my love do love me, 'twill bleed every drop.

This isn't the only rhyme and ritual of this sort, either! Other traditions from the British Isles involved picking yarrow from a young man's grave or on All Hallow's Eve, or sewing it into a sachet or stocking and sleeping with it under your pillow. All of these practices were supposed to bring you dreams of your true love. Read more about these traditions here!

In addition to these suggestions/examples, we would also like to present a selection of resources to help you choose your own botanical inspirations! By no means are these complete guides, but they are a great way to get started.

The Language of Flowers | Archives | Aggie Horticulture

Meaning of Flowers

Hanakotoba - Wikipedia - Japanese flower language

List of plants with symbolism - Wikipedia

Remember, you're not limited to what's on these pages! And if you require further botanical assistance, please feel free to message our expert LunaSilverhart on twitter! She has severe brainworms about plant symbolism and is more than happy to chat.