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**Pass along plants - 2016**

Most gardeners love to talk about their garden, and are more than happy to share a cutting or extra division when they are dividing their plants, or a handful of seeds. As I walk my garden, I like remembering who I got what plant from. This sharing of plants was coined as pass-along plants. Passing along a part of our garden may be a way of sharing grandma's rose bush or that special old-fashioned bulb, or waxing poetic about the attributes of a new hellebore. While gardeners share new and old plants, it is often the older plants that are the more treasured, since those old fashioned plants may no longer be sold in nurseries or garden centers, so getting a cutting or plant from someone who has them may be the only way we can get them for our garden.

It is often said that everything old becomes new again. Growing heirloom plants allows us to grow a piece of our past. When a family is selling the family home, or we move from one town or another, we want to take a piece of our garden for the new one. Many people are into genealogy and discovering where they came from, so gardeners want some of the plants their grandparents or ancestors grew, and they can be hard to find. Consider getting a piece of your own heritage—visit with grandparents, aunts and uncles, and find out what they have in their gardens, or plants they remember. It is a wonderful legacy to have a plant in your garden that your own ancestors grew. This is living genealogy!

Early gardeners didn't have many of the conveniences of modern day gardeners—there were no automatic sprinkler systems, yard services were only available for the wealthy and people wanted plants that were pretty but could take care of themselves. Most heirloom plants were chosen for their ease of growth, disease resistance, fragrance and graceful growth habit. These plants have proven their worth over several generations. While there may be improved cultivars of some of these plants today, they still retain many of the earlier attributes of the original.

Gardeners today are looking for plants that can add beauty to their landscape with little care. Grandma's plants fit that bill, doing well in average soils and requiring little to no pesticides. Some of these plants are native plants; others may have been brought with them when they came to the United States.

Whether you want a piece of your past or you simply want to add a diverse mix of plants to your garden in an inexpensive way, cultivate time with gardeners and start sharing. Think about the old home sites you pass by, some of which are abandoned, yet their plants lived on—the creeping phlox (or thrift) blooming on a low rock wall, daffodils blooming along the side of the road, Rose-of-Sharon in bloom in the summer, or a hedge of yellow forsythia, pink flowering quince and white bridal wreath spiraea to announce spring has arrived! These plants have thrived on neglect.

Consider adding fragrance to your garden by using one of the many antique roses; the spicy scent of Sweet Shrub - *Calycanthus floridus*; the traditional southern charm of gardenia (in the southern two thirds of the state); or Mock Orange – *Philadelphus coronarius*, or the banana shrub *Michelia figo*.

Shrubs with arching stems are easy to root with layering of branches that you can weave in and out of the ground. From forsythia to weigela, viburnums, hydrangeas and beautybush, new plants can be started while they are attached to the mother plant.

Bulbs are a commonly shared plant and many of the older varieties are not readily available in the trade. Schoolhouse lilies or oxblood lily *Rhodophiala bifida*, is not easy to find, but is easy to grow. Bright red amaryllis-like blooms appear on stems in early fall right as school is starting. The flowers don't last more than a week or two, but will come back and multiply annually. Other members of the amaryllis family include some early season white blooming bulbs whose common name can be interchangeably used-- snowdrops or snowflakes. *Galanthus* sp. is what I call snowdrops, and is the first of the two to bloom, followed by *Leucojum* sp. which I refer to as summer snowflakes. Both are great old bulbs which bloom well in the shade. Later blooming amaryllis bulbs include numerous species of *Lycoris*. The two most commonly grown are the pink 'Naked Ladies' *Lycoris squamigera* and the later red surprise lilies, *Lycoris radiata*. One of the oldest bulbs to grace the southern garden is the *Crinum* lily, hardy in the southern 2/3 of Arkansas. Large, coarse-textured in foliage, it has stunning clusters of fragrant white to pink blooms. Other bulb plants that are commonly shared because they multiply are daffodils and iris.

Not all shared plants are winter hardy. Night blooming cereus is the ugly-duckling of the plant world. This gangly cactus is wide spreading and blooms only at night. People hold flower watch parties when buds are about to open, as the flowers are truly spectacular and fragrant, but only last one night. They root readily from cuttings, and will freely be shared by gardeners who have them. *Achimenes* is another small rhizome or bulb-type plant that is related to African violets. It can bloom all summer in a pot outside, but will not overwinter in most of our state. And speaking of African violets, whose grandmother did not have one or two plant sitting on the windowsill? They are easy to propagate from a leaf cutting and share.

Pass along plants can also be shared through seeds. Larkspur, bachelor's buttons, sweet peas and Shirley poppies are seeds that can be sown in the fall for early spring blooms. As temperatures heat up, they set seeds and die to come back the next year. Summer blooming touch me nots, hyacinth bean and cypress vine are easy to share and give great color.

Perennials that need dividing, from daylilies and hostas to the old-fashioned rose campion, 4 o'clock and garden phlox are great to pass along. While there are many new varieties of hardy hibiscus, one that is not readily available except from someone who has one is the Confederate rose, *Hibiscus mutabilis*. This plant blooms in the fall before a frost and is covered in carnation-like blooms.

Don't overlook edibles. Figs root easily, as do blackberries and pomegranates. Gardeners share seeds of beans and peas, cloves of garlic or running onion bulbs.

Gardeners love to share what they grow, and always have. Rarely will you find a gardener that doesn't have a plant in their landscape that was started from a friend's yard or passed along from family members. And if you are a gardener you usually want to share your bounty. All plants don't propagate as easily as others, but many of the tried-and-true can be propagated from cuttings, division or seeds. If you are new to gardening or looking for some of these pass along plants, another good source are the annual Master Gardener plant sales. Most counties who have the MG program, host a plant sale and much of what is sold is propagated from plants in their own gardens. Here is a link to the events and plant sales we know of for this spring  
<http://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/master-gardeners/events.aspx>