

Plants with Pizzatzzzzz !
.....by Christine Gill

Big textured plants with show stopping quality are often put on the back burner with the comment that "there's no room for them in my garden" . It is true that in some small backyards there is no room for them but in most 30 x40 backyards surely you can find a circumference of 8 - 10 ft ? Besides our short summers won't permit them to grow any bigger than 6 ft. Below are a few dazzling specimens you might like to try near the water's edge or at a distance.

Gunera manicata : This is a magnificent marvel in the garden and when grown to perfection commands a view. This large leaf perennial, good to Zone 7 stops you in your tracks. Beautifully textured palmate leaves, 2 - 3 feet in diameter, spread over the crown to a height of 6 ft and take up approximately the same width at its base. It needs good fertile rich damp soil and when placed in sun to partial shade, it will reward you with ribbed textured leaves much like the new growth on a *Crambe cordifolia*. The secret to its beauty is that it needs to be constantly moist. Enjoy this one in a big garden. Plants are very adaptable and If you can spare only a certain amount of room this is one to take a chance with. Worth it !

Rheum Palmatum : (Chinese) Ornamental Rhubarb. This non-edible rhubarb grows well in full sun to partial shade. Give it fertile. Humus-rich moist soil and it will produce attractive stems with jagged-edged reddish leaves that mature to dark green over the summer. Hardy to Zone 3, this makes an excellent replacement for *Gunera* if you don't have the space or the courage. It has large plummy clusters of red to creamy green flowers that reach a height of 8 feet.. Every bit an outstanding specimen that creates a contrast with the surrounding greens. A wonderful companion plant for *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* (very pretty pink panicles of flowers) Meadow Rue. *T.Roshbrunianum* or *T. delavayi* are the ones to look for at garden centres. The latter two varieties have pretty yellow dangling anthers in the flower and grow to 4-5 feet.

Miscanthus sinensis : Japanese Silver Grass. A neat clump forming variety of reed-like stems growing from 6' to 13 ' high depending on the cultivar. On our Windsor pond tour excursion we came across a tall variety in a garden. It was stunning in the medium size (60 x 80') garden with pond, gazebo, patio, etc. Flower heads are fluffy plumes at the top. They make good dry-cut flower arrangements. Require full sun, fertile, moist but well drained soil to perform at their best. *M.s.Eulalia* is 12 ft. *M.s. Gracillimus* is 4 ft. *M.s. Zebrinus* has horizontal yellow stripes. Hardy to Zone 4.

Macleaya cordata : This Plume Poppy is very unlike other members of the poppy family. Be wary of this 6-foot giant as it can get invasive with fertile moist conditions. Needs full sun to bloom. Has beautifully shaped leaves that can be pressed for making cards, tablemats etc. Do not plant too close to a pond or it will penetrate the liner. Keep flowers pruned to control excessive seeding.

Botomus umbellatus - This Flowering Rush forms clumps of long narrow grass-like foliage and grows 3 -4 feet tall at the edge of the pond in muddy patches between rocks or containers making sure that the soil stays constantly wet. From July to September clusters of fragrant pink flowers

stand out atop long stems. They are very easy plants to start from seed. To keep them blooming from year to year it is very important to divide them every spring or they will stop blooming.

Matteuccia 'pennsylvania' : Ostrich Fern needs moist soil and can be grown at the run off near the edge of a pond. Grows from 6 - 9 feet and tolerates full shade. This hardy fern has bold leaves that create a massive effect. An absolute show stopper !

Nymphoides peltata : Floating Heart is a deep-water plant that needs to be planted in a container away from water lilies or it will strangle their blooms. The round pad-like leaves float on the surface and it carries a yellow flower that blooms 2 - 3" above the water in mid-summer. A rapid spreader but a charmer in the pond.

Sarracenia leucophylla Syn. *S. drummondii* - a beautiful variety of the eight insectivorous evergreen/perennial species that are found in the East and North eastern part of North America. They grow in peat bogs or soggy soil at the water's edge. These semi-evergreen perennials bear purple-red flowers in spring and have erect, slender and conical pitchers, which are modified leaves, up to 4 feet long with narrow wings and erect lids with wavy margins. These are usually white and have light purple-red netting, gradually merging into green bases. The flowers are found in tints of purple-red or greenish yellow or blends of the colours that develop into an umbrella to shelter the stamens. Insects are attracted to the foliage colours and slide down the slippery sides drowning in the rainwater that collects at the bottom of the pitcher. They are sometimes called 'Lords & Ladies'.

Sarracenia - The floral emblem of New Foundland. They need full sun. Soil should be humus rich acidic and wet. A mixture of peat and sphagnum moss combined with sand gives it a good base upon which to grow. They are typically acid bog plants and should grow well in your back yard bog at home. Before the snow arrives, snip some pitchers at the base and dry them upside down. They make attractive additions to arrangements.