News Release -

Charles Mitchell

Cooperative Extension Director

Franklin County

**Enhancing Fall Annual Beds**

Ornamental cabbage and kale have become extremely popular fall annual crops for color enhancers in the landscape. The colorful foliage tends to last a long time and will often remain colorful until temperatures reach 15 degrees Fahrenheit. They are often great compliments with other fall annual plants such as chrysanthemums and pansies. These colorful plants come in reds, pinks, and white cultivars. These ornamental vegetables also can provide yellow flowers in the spring to add additional color.

Ornamental mustards and Swiss chard also provide fall and winter color to landscapes. Red mustard produces large leaves and can reach a height of three feet. Pak-choi, a mustard-spinach type crop has fleshy dark-green leaves with white petioles. Swiss chard is a relative of the beet with colorful leaves and a stalk that can reach 12-18 inches tall.

These colorful plants should be planted in soils with a pH of 5.8-6.2. October temperatures are ideal for planting and rains are adequate after initial planting. A standard complete fertilizer such as 10-10-10 can be used once a month or you can use a water soluble complete fertilizer once a week. Pests that you should be concerned with are caterpillars, aphids, and flea beetles. Diseases to look out for would be alternaria leaf spot, black rot, downy mildew and stem rot.

Popular cultivars of ornamental cabbage include: ‘Osaka Pink’, ‘Osaka Red’, ‘Osaka White’, ‘Rose Bouquet’, ‘Pigeon Red’, and ‘Pigeon White’. Popular cultivars of ornamental kale include: ‘Coral Prince’, ‘Frizzy Red’, ‘Frizzy Pink’, ‘Snow Prince’, ‘Nagoya Rose’, ‘Chidori White’ and ‘Sparrow Red’. One of the most colorful Swiss chards is ‘Bright Lights.’

For more information about gardening and planting fall annual beds, contact your local Franklin County Cooperative Extension Office at 919-496-3344. You can also visit the website at franklin.ces.ncsu.edu.

