



Fall for Anemones

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

While autumn is primarily associated with the warm colors of fall leaves, pumpkins and mums, there's something intriguing about the more delicate colors of fall flowering anemones. The many cultivars of these Japanese anemones (*Anemone x hybrida*, *A. vitifolia* and *A. hupehensis*) carry single, semi-double or double flowers on long, willowy stems. This diverse genus of about 70 species also includes tuberous rooting types.

Flower colors range from snowy white through various shades of pink to almost lavender depending on the cultivar. The soft, showy flower 'petals' are actually sepals as this plant is known as 'apetalous', meaning that it has no actual petals. Plants may continue flowering well into October, weather permitting.

While Japanese anemones will tolerate full sun in moist soils, ideal placement for them is in a partially shaded site. Not only will plants be happier, but in these locations, their white and pink flowers light up the shaded areas in late summer and early fall. If planted in a sunny area, try to set plants where they will receive morning sun rather than strong late afternoon sunshine.

Most Japanese anemone cultivars are hardy through USDA zones 4 to 7. Plants should be set out after the last frost in late spring as they often need one or two seasons to get established. One may want to apply a mulch of pine boughs over plants their first winter season.

Once established, many fall blooming anemones have a tendency to spread by stolons and form clumps. They are a good choice for naturalizing and may not be suitable for smaller beds unless plants are lifted and thinned every 2 or 3 years. Situate them where they do have room to spread, if possible. Anemones pair well with other fall bloomers such as asters, Joe-Pye weed, mums and goldenrods.

Plants range in height from 2 to 5 feet tall. Be sure to note the height when choosing a plant.

Staking is typically not needed except for some of the taller cultivars and mostly just when plants are in a location that is too shady so stems elongate reaching for the sun.

Deadheading or removal of spent flowers is not necessary, but some gardeners prefer to tidy up the flower beds. If left, unique, fluffy, globe-shaped seedheads form. Once hit by frost, anemone leaves blacken. They can be cut back if cleaning out the bed in late fall or left as winter protection.

Japanese anemones have few problems and are rarely bothered by deer or rabbits. Occasionally some insect feeding may be noticed.

Two outstanding heirloom white cultivars are ‘Honorie Jobert’, introduced in 1858, with flower stems reaching up to 3 feet tall and ‘Whirlwind’ discovered in New York in 1887 and sporting semi-double flowers at about the same height.



White anemone – unknown cultivar. Photo by dmp2011.

For pink, look to ‘September Charm’, and English selection introduced in 1932. It has large, single darker pink flowers that continue blooming through mid-October. Plants average 24 to 32 inches tall. One of the best dark pinks is ‘Bressingham Glow’, which blooms from August

through to October. Flowers are deep rose pink and semi-double and held atop 28 to 36 inch stems. It was introduced by Alan Bloom.



Pink anemone – unknown cultivar. Photo by dmp2011.

Anemones are often referred to as windflowers possibly because of the way the blossoms sway in the wind or possibly because they were noticed growing on windy sites. While commonly referred to as Japanese anemones, most fall blooming species did not originate in Japan but rather in China. They were discovered by the Scottish botanist, Robert Fortune, who noticed them growing in Chinese graveyards. He noted they were a ‘most appropriate ornament for the last resting places of the dead’. Plants were sent back to England in 1844 where European breeders started creating new garden forms.

Autumn blooming flowers symbolize the hope gardeners have that although a cold, dark winter lies ahead for us, spring will eventually return bringing with it a new season of growth and abundance.

If you have questions about fall blooming anemones or on any other horticultural topic, call the UCONN Home and Garden Education Center, toll-free, at 877.486.6271, visit their website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension Center.