Autumn Splendor

To the west of Gainesville lies an extraordinary country home replete with a reflection pond and terraces overlooking a secret, walled garden. The homeowners started with a formal design, but needed a makeover with color and flowers for cutting. Delphiniums, snapdragons, nemesia, dahlias, pansies and sweet peas were all chosen for bouquets and their ability to bloom throughout the cool season.

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A Walled Garden Transformed for the Cool Weather Season

BY JON GEORGE

Jon George is the owner of Cottage Gardens, Inc., a Gainesville-based landscape design and installation firm. Jon has been gardening in North Central Florida for more than 30 years. You may contact his staff at *www.TheCottageGardener.com* or at *cottagegardensinc@yahoo.com.*

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A garden devoted mainly to cut flowers has always been a goal of mine. Nothing compares with a freshly picked bouquet brought in from the yard. With beautiful fall weather in store, some of the best gardening conditions of the year are upon us.

Dahlias prefer cooler autumnal temperatures and are just beginning a late flush of blooms.

For best results, cut the stems early in the morning and plunge the stems into hot water to prolong vase life.

"fall is the time to plant for bouquets"

Delphiniums (left) are relatively easy to grow in rich, moist soil and cool conditions. Few people know that they survive a freeze as well as any pansy, and make good bedding companions to other winter annuals.

My favorite flowers for cutting are dahlias (top), for their brilliant colors and fantastic forms.

Snapdragons (right) make another fun cut flower. My children love to make the "mouths" of each bloom snap shut with their fingers. Longevity in the vase and cold hardiness in the garden make these plants a good choice for the fall bouquets.

A good topdressing of organic fertilizer and kelp meal will keep plants blooming all season long.