



For Immediate Use

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Hellebores, the deer resistant winter blooming plant!

Hellebores, a beautiful and durable perennial for the garden, grow in almost any situation except soggy sites. For the most part, they are native to Europe. Prized for their year round interest, hellebores bloom in mid to late winter when everything else seems so drab; and if cooler weather lingers, extend their blooming period, up to a month or more. Performing well in woodland settings, they have a tendency to be more tolerate of drought conditions than other plants.

Helleborus orientalis hybrids have caught the public's attention. They range in color from black purple, to red purple, white, pink and yellow; and are known for their flower shapes as well as double flowers.

Growing 2 feet wide, *Helleborus orientalis* also grow about 15 inches tall and their leaves remain evergreen year around. In addition to an ability to have few diseases or pest, helleborus are deer resistant because of alkaloid toxins that they produce. While it is best to remove the past year's leaves in mid-winter so that their flowers are prominent, the plants later send up green new foliage.



Some newer *Helleborus orientalis* varieties available are Pine Knot Strain, (includes all the range of colors as well as some seedlings from double and semi double forms.), Lady Series,(Blue, Pink, Red , White, White Spotted, and Yellow.) Southern Belle strain (Double Oriental Lenten Rose mixed colors). Only a few of the abundance of new varieties available, the Virginia Nursery & Landscape Association's Beautiful Gardens™ Plant Introduction Program is presently testing additional varieties and developing propagation protocols that will enable economically mass-produce individual varieties rather than relying on seedlings, which are known to create variable bloom characteristics.



An equally popular *Helleborus* species is the *H. foetidus*, or the Stinky Hellebore. This species has dark green leaves with long lobes. They are usually about 18-24 inches tall. For the winter garden, the flowering stems emerge with lime-green bell like blooms. Beautiful attractive flowers remain until early spring and in ideal conditions, will naturalize wooded areas. This variety also tolerates dry summer conditions and provides evergreen foliage in the winter.



Two other popular species are the *Helleborus niger*, (The Christmas Rose) with white blooms and *Helleborus argutifolius* with serrate trifoliate leaves. Standing about 2 feet tall, they bear creamy light green flowers on taller stalks. All of these species and varieties are worth investigating and a 'must try' in your own garden to add off-season color and contribute deer resistance!

To explore further options, visit a local garden center with Virginia Certified Horticulturist on staff locate on www.VirginiaGardening.com, click on the region of the map that you live in for a list of certified garden centers

near you.

Another excellent resource, newly published by Timber Press www.timberpress.com, is *Hellebores: A Comprehensive Guide* by C. Colston Burrell and Judith Knott Tyler. This is a great book for everything you need to know about Hellebores from their use in ancient history, propagation and hybridization information, landscape use, planting and care, disease and pest issues, identification of different varieties with descriptions and over 140 photos and much more.

As the 'go green' columnist for the Virginia Green Industry Council, I want to challenge you to 'go green', keep the State of Virginia green and growing. Familiarize yourself with drought tolerant and pest resistant plants such as helleborus. Then, join me and my colleagues in our effort to enhance the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. For details of the Council's activities, see www.virginiagreen.org or call 540-382-0943 or email info@VirginiaGreen.org. Together, let's 'GoGreen'!

Jeff Miller, founder of Horticulture Management Associates LLC, serves as the Executive Director for the VA Green Industry Council, www.virginiagardening.com. Contributing a diverse background of nursery, greenhouse and landscape experience, Miller challenges all to 'GoGreen'.

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