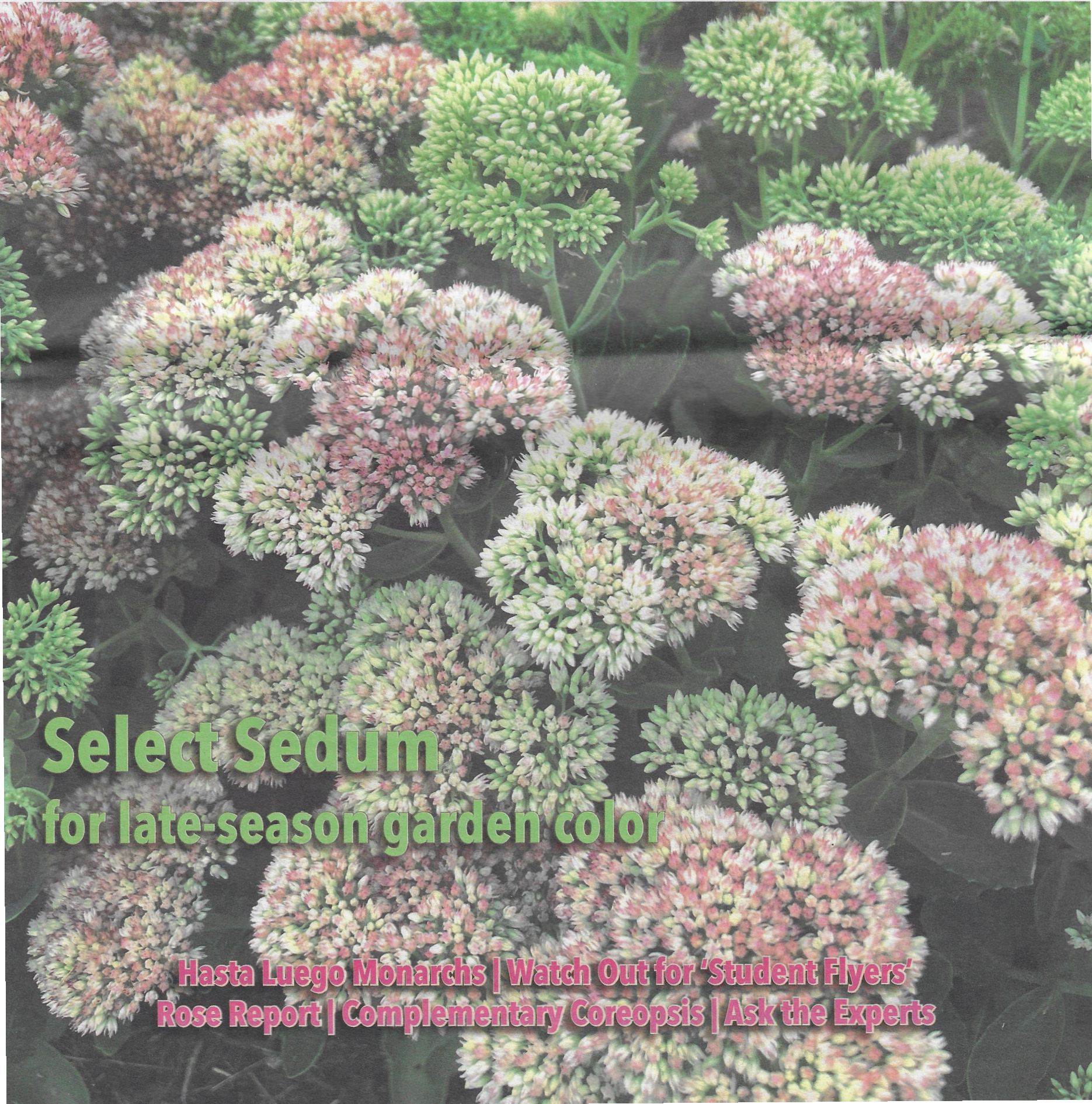


The Kansas City GARDENER

September 2023 | kcgmag.com



**Select Sedum
for late-season garden color**

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Select Sedum

for late-season garden color

Autumn is creeping ever closer and our gardens are showing the stress of a hot summer. When planning your landscape in the spring, it is easy to include plants that give spring and summer blooms, but we often forget about late-season color in the midst of the spring frenzy. Gardeners from novice to expert both find it a challenge to identify plants that can withstand the summer heat and look good by the time they bloom in August and September. One of the best choices for late-season color is Sedum.

Sedum, commonly referred to as Stonecrop, or as my grandmother called them “Live-Forever”, is a versatile succulent perfect for many problem areas of the landscape. They thrive in full sun (6 or more hours of direct sun daily), tolerate rocky soils, and require little water once established, making them perfect for Xeriscaping (landscaping requiring little to no irrigation). To pollinators, the bloom clusters are each a five-star restaurant offering a supply of nectar for bees and butterflies through the blooming season.

Many new varieties are introduced by perennial growers every year, giving landscapers and gardeners much more variety than the old standard ‘Autumn Joy’ cultivar. Dozens of newer cultivars offer different foliage colors, textures, and improved growing habits over older types. Even though we are nearing the end of the season, it is a great time to get a jump start on next year’s perennial garden by exploring some new sedum varieties.

‘Autumn Fire’ and ‘Frosted Fire’ are similar to ‘Autumn Joy’, but grow in a tighter habit, and

don’t tend to get as leggy throughout the summer. If you are seeking variety in foliage color, ‘Back in Black’, ‘Night Embers’ and ‘Touchdown Teak’ all display dark foliage on a 1-2’ tall plant all sea-

er varieties look at home planted among larger stones and boulders, while small mounding varieties add interest when tucked between stones and along rock walls.

Stonecrop is also very showy



Photo credit: Walters Gardens.

Autumn Fire

son long, giving interest even when the plant isn’t in bloom. To add contrast in texture and size, ‘Blue Elf’, ‘Lime Zinger’, ‘Firecracker’ and ‘Steel the Show’ all boast great foliage color on a 6-8” mounding habit that doesn’t spread wildly like some of the groundcover types. If you are a fan of the mounding/spreading ‘Kamtschaticum’, ‘Boogie Woogie’ and ‘Atlantis’ are both must-haves that keep to their tidy, mounding habit.

One of the most popular uses for sedum is in a rock garden. Tall-

er varieties look at home planted among larger stones and boulders, while small mounding varieties add interest when tucked between stones and along rock walls. Stonecrop is also very showy as a mass planting in borders or as edging along paths. Taller varieties add texture to the middle of the border, as well as late-season blooms when other perennials are bloomed out for the year. Shorter, mounding types are particularly showy when planted as edging along pathways. Their drought tolerance makes them a perfect candidate to plant in areas of the yard that don’t receive much water, atop berms, and in areas that are mulched with gravel or decorative rock.

The most important thing to

consider when choosing a site for your sedum is soil drainage. Sedum can tolerate spring rains, as long as they are in fast-draining soils; try to avoid planting them where they will receive frequent water or runoff from irrigation systems. To improve drainage, work compost into the bed. In addition to good drainage, make sure they receive plenty of sunlight, at least 6 hours or more each day—the hotter, the better.

Gardeners generally find very few problems with their sedum. Deer tend to avoid them, and most insects don’t bother them. Overwatering is the most common cause of a sedum’s demise. If we have an early spring, lots of rain, or too much fertilizer is applied, stonecrop can tend to quickly grow tall on weak stems, which causes them to flop by the time fall arrives. To avoid this, give them a trim early in the season to stunt their growth a bit, letting them grow to a few inches tall, then pinching them back by about half by mid-June in order to promote bushy growth. Overcrowded plants can be dug up and divided in early spring, before they begin to grow.

Fertilizer is rarely required for a good crop of sedum, but if you feel the need, use a balanced slow-release fertilizer like Osmocote, or an organic fertilizer like Espoma Garden Tone. Finally, though they are drought tolerant plants, stonecrop is not a cactus, so it does occasionally need supplemental water during dry spells, especially to get it established during its first couple of seasons. With proper care, any gardener can enjoy season-long interest from this landscape favorite, the Live-Forever.



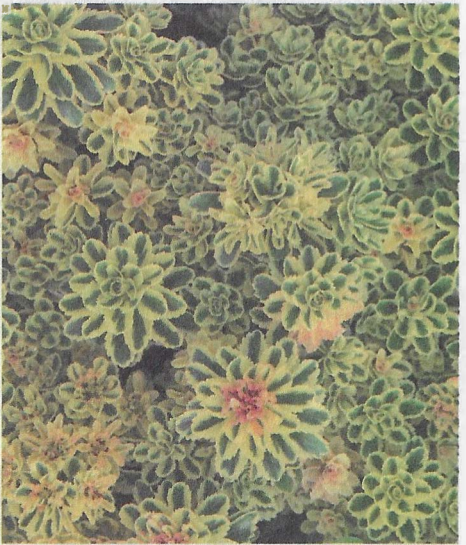
SEAN HOLLAND
Perennials Manager

Sean Holland is Perennials Manager at Suburban Lawn & Garden, 135th and Wornall location, in Kansas City, Missouri. You may reach him at seanh@suburbanlg.com.



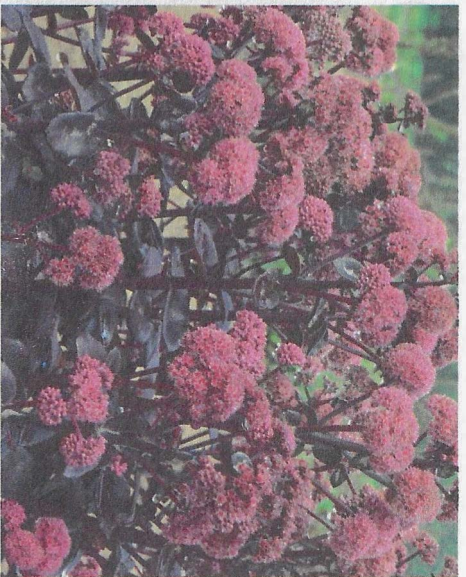
Firecracker

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



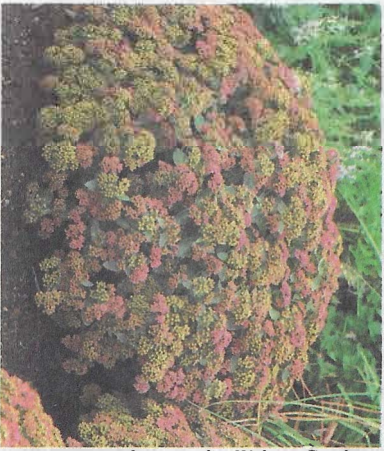
Atlantis

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Night Embers

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



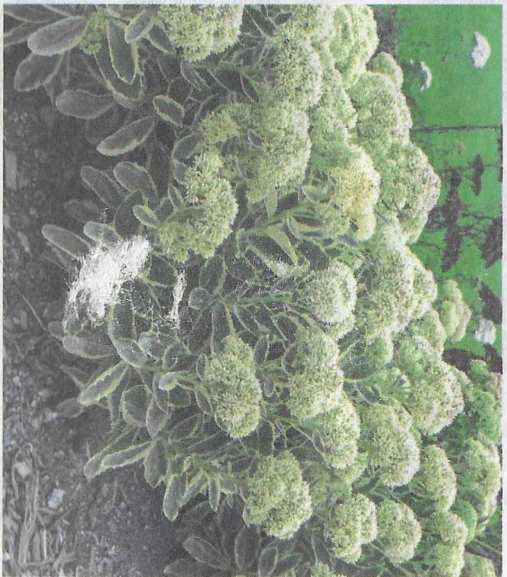
Coraljade

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Touchdown Teak

Photo credit: Terra Nova.



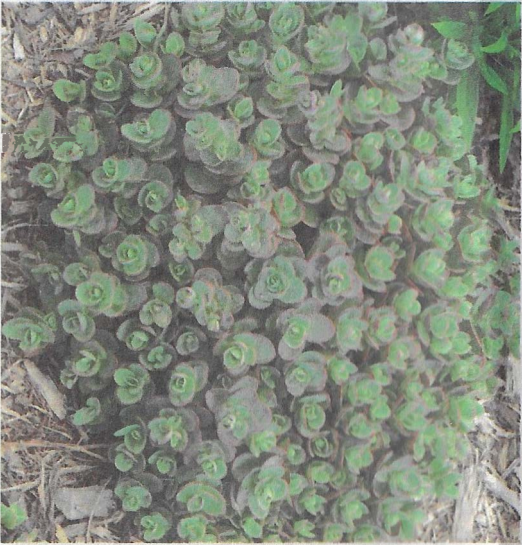
Frosted Fire

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Kamtschaticum

Photo credit: Bluestem Perennials.



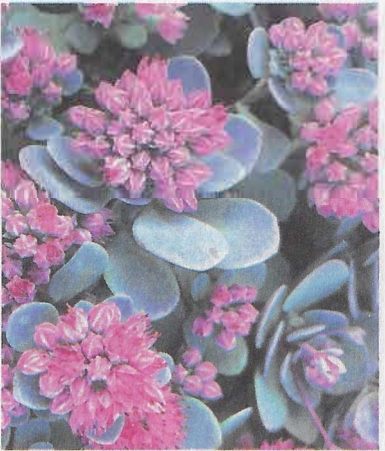
Lime Zinger

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Autumn Joy

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



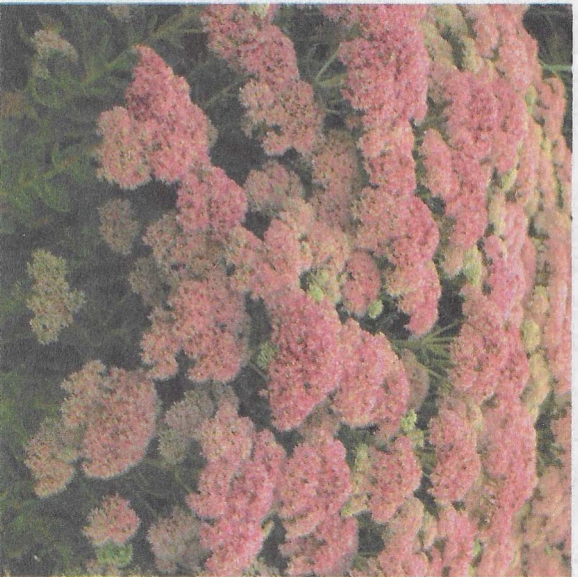
Boogie Woogie

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Back in Black

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Steel the Show

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.



Blue-Elf

Photo credit: Walters Gardens.