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Mid-Atlantic

June 18, 2009

By Charlotte Kidd,
Radnor, PA

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Surprising, Sustainable Sedums

Most of us don't worry about our plants flying away under the tempest of a helicopter's whirling blades. Philadelphia's PECO headquarter's green roof with helipad isn't your typical garden. Its perennials live in extremes of wind, sun, and heat.

However, its textural, colorful, sculptural sedums -- some blooming white, others yellow or pink -- ARE within our reach for a fascinating, low maintenance, drought-tolerant landscape.

Low-growing sedums don't usually catch my floral-seeking eye. Being up close and personal with nearly 43,000 square feet of thriving showy stonecrop (sedum's common name) gives pause -- and appreciative perspective. En masse, this mingling array of ten sedum varieties is quite beautiful. It's easy to imagine the mix bordering a path, walkway, driveway, or forming a rock garden, or covering a sunny, dry slope.

On a recent June afternoon, The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society hosted a trolley tour featuring PECO's green roof at 23rd and Market along with other Philadelphia Green projects.

Last fall, the stonecrops were planted on the green roof as vegetative mats in 4 inches of gravel and some compost. Newly installed young ornamental grasses and flowers in raised beds haven't yet filled out. Retrofitting this roof portion, which covers mechanical equipment, is one step in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building certification.

From a sustainable, environmental view, green roofs are built primarily to control storm water runoff. The PECO green roof is designed to absorb 60 to 70 percent of approximately 1.5 million gallons of annual rainwater falling on the main office building.

Green roofs can significantly reduce roof temperatures which can lower building heating and cooling costs. Green roof plants absorb air pollutants.



When conditions are desertlike -- dry, hot, and sunny -- thick-leaved sedums are an attractive low-maintenance option.

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Pink, Red, Rose Foliage/Flowers

This non-irrigated sedum tapestry includes low green and red swirls of *Sedum album* 'Coral Carpet'. The foliage turns red under stress, and in drought and cold. Its parent *Sedum album* is a taller (6-inch) green roof staple with white flowers and green leaves that turn red in winter.

Short, blue-green *Sedum hispanicum* shows blues, pinks, and purples depending on temperature, water, and nutrients.

Sedum spurium 'Rosea' leaves form circular florets; they bloom pink in autumn. *Sedum spurium* 'Fuldaglut' (two row stonecrop) forms mats of thick, oval, maroon leaves on four-inch stems with small, rose-red, star-shaped flowers in August.

Yellow Flowers

Yellow-flowering *Sedum kamschaticum* is 6 inches tall and resembles pachysandra from a distance. Eight-inch *Sedum rupestre* holds bright yellow flowers high above blue-green leaves and stems. Clumps of 8-inch green *Sedum sexangulare* have yellow blooms too. *Sedum floriferum* spreads lushly to 12 inches with canary yellow, star-shaped flowers in spring. Light green *Sedum hybridum* 'Immergrunchen' turns amber in winter and blooms yellow in June and September.

Many green-roof recommended sedums hail from the tough environment of the Ural Mountains to Mongolia. They're long-lived. They self-propagate. When they reach mature height on the roof, they're gently cut back. The cut stems are tossed on empty or sparsely populated spots, then watered so they'll take root.

In case you're just curious OR your helicopter's coming in for a landing on your sedum garden: Spraying the sedum and gravel with water keep all in place through the whirlwind.

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Comments on **Surprising, Sustainable Sedums** [add a comment](#)

We welcome your questions and comments about this column. If you have gardening questions unrelated to the column, please ask them on our message boards.

TC Conner (Master Gardener) [add a comment](#)
18-Jun-2009 18:07:08

Hello Ms. Charlotte, My comment is in regard to your "National News: June 18, 2009 From NGA Editors," in particular, the "New Kitchen Scrap Composter" for sale at Gardener's Supply Company <<http://www.gardeners.com/Kitchen-Scrap-Composter/37-711,default,pd.html>>. It's my understanding that no meat or dairy scraps go into a compost pile, I do not put them in mine, and most folks I know who compost don't add those kinds of scraps either. GSC's Web page for the Kitchen Scrap Composter states: "You can add fruit, vegetables, egg shells, dairy, meat, coffee grounds, grains and more." My question to you is should meat and dairy scraps be used in the Kitchen Scrap Composter?

Julia Carlson [add a comment](#)
18-Jun-2009 21:21:24

Are sedum deer resistant?

Ann [add a comment](#)
18-Jun-2009 23:58:30

About dairy & meat in the kitchen scrap composter... I certainly think soured milk can go in, but I can't think of anything categorized as MEAT that could be added, except maybe HAIR. And



nothing cooked. I think the 'list' was compiled by by some secretary who wasn't told exactly what to write and she was 'confused'. [We all know this stuff, but I don't think it hurts to bring it up again.]

Charlotte Kidd

[add a comment](#)

19-Jun-2009 17:32:20

Hi TC, I'm taken aback. I didn't write anything about the New Kitchen Scrap Composter. I would never suggest putting meat or dairy in any compost pile. They're not direct, degradable plant material - nitrogen and carbon sources we want for composting. Adding those materials is contrary to the usual recommendations for compostable materials. Also, rotting meat and souring dairy products can attract animals you won't want near your garden. As you quoted from the GSC's Web page, would be a good idea to point out their statement and ask for more information or explanation. Charlotte

Charlotte Kidd

[add a comment](#)

19-Jun-2009 17:45:54

Hi Ann, I have seen "hair" listed among compostable materials. Never soured milk or meat. I'm sticking with the umbrella term 'plant material' for the compost pile. I have no problem adding moldy cooked carrots and four-day-old oatmeal to the compost pile though. No insect-infested or disease-ridden garden debris though. I'm reluctant to toss in weeds - except wee weed seedlings. No English ivy (I'm concerned it could take root), no poison ivy, no weed seed pods. Charlotte

Ann

[add a comment](#)

20-Jun-2009 16:04:04

<http://www.bhg.com/dgroups/index.jsp?plckForumPage=ForumDiscussion&plckDiscussionId=Cat%3aGardenForum%3abhggardentalkDiscussion%3ae0aed51-ae41-4588-857b-245ababd32d3&plckCurrentPage=0&plckCategoryCurrentPage=0>

Ann

[add a comment](#)

20-Jun-2009 16:08:55

<http://www.garden.org/regional/report/national/3154> See composter write-up

Charlotte Kidd

[add a comment](#)

22-Jun-2009 20:29:58

Hi Julia, I wish I could answer definitely yes or no. In my experience, deer have nibbled off the tops of 'Autumn Joy', a medium-sized ornamental sedum. On the other hand, there are web pages with info claiming that sedums are deer-resistant. Maybe those sources are referring to the short varieties. If you want to give some a try, plant three or five as an experiment. Would be great if you'd get back to me with a note on this blog ... indicating which type they are and whether or not they are deer food.

Charlotte Kidd

[add a comment](#)

23-Jun-2009 05:42:51

The Mid-Atlantic Hardy Plant Society has emailed the following information about southeastern Pennsylvania places that take rinsed-out nursery pots. Groff's Nursery, 6128 Street Rd, Kirkwood PA 17536 - bins provided in parking lot. Carolyn's Shade Garden, 325 S Roberts Rd, Bryn Mawr PA 19010, carolynsshadegardens@verizon.net. cardboard boxes, ONLY plastic nursery pots- size 200 (round, 6" tall x 6" diameter), 4" square

and 5" square. Point Phillip Perennials, 2764 W. Scenic Dr., Danielsville PA 18038, www.ppperennials.com. No pots larger than 1 gallon. Briar Rose Nursery, 1581 Briertown Rd (off Rt 322 - Lancaster Co), East Earl PA. Rob Broekhuis, 279 Hopewell Dr, Allentown PA 18104, www.robsplants.com. 4"-1-gallon pots. Drop off at his driveway. Charlotte

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