

Hot chocolate

By Deborah Donovan | Daily Herald Staff

Published: 2/9/2008 12:09 AM

Chocolate and flowers are a traditional pairing for Valentine's Day.

So how about chocolate-colored flowers?

Plants with chocolate-covered foliage make a bold statement in the garden. And designers are equally passionate about using this deep, rich shade inside the house.

Check out the Chocolate delphinium at www.waysidegardens.com or chocolate mint coleus at www.burpee.com.

Another favorite available on gardening Web sites and later this spring at local gardening centers is chocolate Joe-Pye weed or eupatorium rugosum Chocolate. The leaves are a chocolate color and the blooms are said to exude that famous aroma. Chocolate Chip bugleweed is a variation of the popular ground cover.

We asked designers what colors go with chocolate for Valentine's Day and for spring decorating.

An easier question might be, what colors don't go with chocolate?

Jennifer Striepling of JPS Design and Project Management, who has an office in Gilberts, says combining too many dark colors can make a room look like a cave.

For example, chocolate and burgundy can look great together, but she would use them as accents in a room with warm beige or even off-white walls.

Striepling is working on decorating a home office with chocolate and fuchsia. Honest.

If you get a box of chocolates for Valentine's Day, the pinks, greens and yellows in it could give you a clue for a palette, said Joan Kaufman, a designer based in Naperville.

She would put these shade -- rich pastels that she calls saturated -- in a child's room.

In the family room, Kaufman would pair chocolate with earth tones like red-orange, sage green and amber yellow.

And a masculine environment would work with blue or silver.

Chocolate is almost the new neutral, said Mollee Johnson, designer with Tinaglia Architects in Arlington Heights.

She loves chocolate with blue or pink, and her young daughter's nursery is pale pink and chocolate.

But she thinks you might be seeing these popular combinations a little too frequently.

So she recommends a citrus green or a pale yellow or gold.

"Chocolate and different tones of cream can be absolutely gorgeous for those who are really afraid of color," she said.