We're still dealing with the aftereffects of Hurricane Ike in various ways. We've had to deal with insurance personnel and crews, and some have had interactions with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other groups. During a conversation with a neighbor, he noted that everyone who was affected by Ike is trying to re-establish a semblance of their normal daily routine.

By his own admission, my neighbor is not a "high energy" gardener in the traditional sense, but he knows the scientific, common and colorful names of each plant in his landscape. He is a home owner who appreciates and enjoys the outdoor living spaces provided by his landscape. His prize work is now sparsely covered with leaves and he abhorred the dominance of cool color scheme in his landscape as dull brown.

While my neighbor did not want to do a major makeover, he wanted to highlight his remaining landscape and asked for some guidelines. My recommendation is to cut cool-season bedding plants to add drama in the back area where little or nothing is done (three or more plants) in the back area where the family spends most of their time; I think that is a pity.

Don't forget to include Fragrant plants such as petunias, dianthus, pansies, crape myrtle, angelonia, and any variations of those colors. While combining equally well with either group, and true blue flowers also look good with just about any other color. Use color where you want to draw attention. The human eye is instantly drawn to color. Never use color to "beautify" an unsatisfactory feature in your landscape such as a fire hydrant, storage shed or trash can area. You will simply make every one notices it, and the color will not make it look any better. Use color where you can enjoy it. Many gardeners lavish their attention and garden budget on their front gardens, and this is a wonderful gift they provide to their neighbors. But when little or nothing is done in the back area where the family spends most of their time, I think that is a pity.

Creating an attractive, colorful look is easier than ever. Update No. 1 on my neighbor. He has established a couple of beds of colorful petunias near his driveway entrance. He says the planting gives him a smile and brightens his spirits when arriving home during these stressful days after Hurricane Ike.

Update No. 2 on my neighbor: His neighbors (myself included) also get to share a smile and some cheer as we drive by his delightful display of fall color!

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The human eye is instantly drawn to color. Cool season bedding plants can provide dramatic splashes of color to the landscape, especially those faulted by Hurricane Ike.

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