

# Cut Flowers From Your Garden



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# Preface

This ebook helps you discover repeat-blooming flowers, which are ideal for constant cutting and are perfect for growing in your garden. Many of these plants provide outstanding color and are easy to grow from seed or purchased from garden centers or online nurseries.

This guide is not the definitive listing of all these cut-and-cut again plants.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies about their growing conditions and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, best growth conditions, and recommended varieties to find and grow. Please be aware these plants may not be available, discontinued, or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The following plants use their Latin name first, then by a common name or names.

The digital photos are of the flowers at my home, garden centers, public gardens, and Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

# Introduction

## **Bringing outdoor beauty indoors.**

There is an art and science behind the simple act of cutting flowers and placing them in a vase of water. What we should enjoy outdoors is now deliberately sacrificed to spend its remaining days of beauty confined indoors. Let's call it a transformation of pleasure, from the outdoor enjoyment of nature to the confines of our shelter away from nature.

This ebook is not about how to decorate a vase full of flowers but of what flowers to add to those vases. And not just any flower, but those that you can cut again and again during the growing season. They are flowers you can enjoy while they bloom in the garden but still have some to enjoy in your house.

There are several popular garden flowers suitable for cutting. In this ebook, I have limited those plants that can re-grow more flowers suitable for picking or cutting over the summer and into the fall. I have not included plants that form only one flower, one stem holding several flowers or those which provide only a short seasonal bloom. We should enjoy them only for their limited outdoor beauty.

Which garden would be more enjoyable: one full of re-blooming flowers after you picked several stems or a permanent area of naked stems or leaves after the picking or cutting?

I have forgone any inclusion of many garden flower bulbs such as tulips, daffodils, lilies, gladiolus, and other single stem flowers. Instead, I will acknowledge several flowers that appear to thrive and re-bloom when cut or picked. Here, you can enjoy the best of both worlds — the beauty of them blooming in the garden, and later admiring them as an indoor display.

All of this outdoor to indoor floral enjoyment centers on how to cut and adequately care for those honored flowers. The simple way is to pick and stick each stem in a glass of freshwater. After several days of

researching professional cut flower growers' ideas on keeping flowers alive in a vase, I have concluded this is probably the best way! This easy-peasy method involves a little more interaction and daily maintenance. But the most straightforward methods are usually the most reliable.

For space and typing fingers fatigue limitations, I will not describe most ways to extend the life and beauty of each cut flower. Instead, here are a few examples of life-extension techniques considered a waste of time by most florists and growers of cut-flowers:

- Dissolving several tablets of aspirin in the vase water. The idea is that if aspirin can thin your blood, it can prevent bacterial clots from forming in a flower's stem. No, keep the aspirin for your headaches — which gardening can occasionally give you.
- Adding sugar or honey to the water. The idea is to give the flowers a boost of energy since stripping off most, or all the leaves prevents photosynthesis. Sounds logical, and may happen, but the bacteria in the water will love you for doing this action.
- Adding a teaspoon, or better yet, a tablespoon of chlorine to the water will kill all bacteria. Yes, it will, but it also destroys the cells in a flower's stem. You have poisoned your flowers with intentional kindness. Save the chlorine for your cleaning supplies.

The best and easy way to care for all cut flowers is to:

- Change the water and perform a new — submerged in water — stem cut each day. Cutting the stems in water will prevent an “air plug” developing at the cut end of the stem. This air seal will prevent water from being transported by the cells up the stem and into the flower. Perform both acts every day, your flowers will remain fresh for a week or longer depending on the species. Forgive me if I repeat these actions several times in this ebook while describing the flowers and how to get maximum freshness and durability.

- Avoid submerging leaves attached to the stems; they will quickly rot and feed bacteria.
- Keep your flowers away from direct sunlight and warm rooms. The coolness of air conditioning can help to add a few extra days of freshness to your displays.
- It is also advisable to spritz or spray water vapor over your flowers daily to help keep water in their petals.
- One significant but overlooked way to keep your flowers fresh is to wash the vase before use. It may look clean, but scrubbing it out before placing (and especially when replacing) your cut flowers inside it prevents bacterial and fungal spores from growing.

Now, let's see which garden plants you can grow to provide several bouquets for your house.

Once again, this ebook is not a guide on how to arrange flowers in a vase. That job is for you. If done my way, all you would end up with is a single pretty flower in a glass of water.

The commonly used adage of "less is more" seems adequate in flower arranging. I would also add the words of Henry David Thoreau, "simplicity, simplicity, simplicity." My hope is your indoor vase "gardens" reflect the beauty you created in your outdoor gardens.

**To find plants or seeds of the following species and varieties, please visit your nearby larger garden centers or search online to find specialty nurseries that grow and sell them.**

# Achillea – Yarrow

## Achillea filipendula



**"Weeds are flowers too, once you get to know them."**

— spoken by Eeyore from A. A. Milne's *"Winnie the Pooh"*

Considered a weed, wild-growing Yarrow thrives in disturbed areas. Through hybridization with other related species, growers have created very colorful varieties with a less aggressive weedy growth habit. These types have proven to be great for growing in perennial flower beds. Not only are the clusters of flowers beautiful, but the plants exhibit carefree growth. They are a splendid example of one of your "plant and forget" perennials.

As a member of the Aster family, these plants can grow to three feet tall or more, depending on soil fertility. Newer hybrids grow less tall and are bushy.

Famous for cottage and wild gardens, this hardy perennial (zones 3 to 9) works best in an informal flower bed, such as one devoted to wildflowers. Once planted, you will not have to care for it, but spend the time admiring the colorful flower clusters.

Yarrow blooms all summer when planted in full sun and well-drained soil. The dark-green to silvery-white, serrated leaves (depending on the variety) are attractive and pungently herbal scented.

Another reason to grow this plant is of it being a long-lasting cut flower — most lasting up to a week or more in a daily fresh water-filled vase. It populates its long stems with several white, light to dark pink, red, or bright yellow “flattened” flower clusters (called corymbs). Be sure to include the stems attractive, feathery leaves for an additional attraction.

# Alstroemeria – Peruvian Lily

## *Alstroemeria species and hybrids*



**“Fake news” by florists prevented gardeners from growing these plants.**

This tender to hardy perennial is not a true lily, but the exotic-looking blossoms resemble one. Many of you may not recognize these plants. When you visit your local florist, you will see what the typical flower looks like before growing them in your garden. Once established, you will have handfuls of cut-flowers available for your house.

Supposedly, years ago, florists were so enamored by these plants for their long keeping ability as cut-flowers they tried to keep gardeners from growing them. They persuaded the gardening public that

*Alstroemeria* was challenging to grow and a waste of time in attempting to do so. For a while, the plan worked until enough adventurous gardeners took on the challenge to grow them in their gardens — and succeed.

The florists were correct, though, in their assertion that these plants were not very hardy, especially in colder climates. For gardeners in warmer climates, these tuberous plants mimic our common *Hemerocallis* or Daylilies, except each flower lasts many days instead of a single day.

The flowers are bright yellow, orange, white, pink, or red, with a contrasting throat color splashed with purple-brown streaks or spots on each petal. Some species have stunningly beautiful pale lavender-purple flowers.

Breeders are trying to establish better winter hardiness since they are native to South America's tropical locations. Although the proposed northern survival limit is zone 7, gardeners will need to plant them deeper in sandy soil and at a southern exposure.

They grow well in full sun to partial shade in well-drained, sandy soil with plenty of added organic compost. Mulch the plants well to protect their roots from the extremes of summer and winter temperatures. Their height is approximately 30 inches, and space plants one foot apart. You can also plant them in large containers. I highly recommend this for colder climate gardeners to hold overwinter inside the house or heated garage.

*Alstroemeria* spreads by underground swollen roots or rhizomes, but when established, they can become brittle, so avoid transplanting them.

They make long-lasting cut flowers, which can last up to two weeks by changing the vase water daily, along with an extra re-cut of the stems. Outdoor plants will bloom for several weeks beginning in the early summer and extend until fall. Wow! I am so envious of you warm-climate gardeners!

These plants are rarely available except in larger garden centers, and here they grow as potted plants. Warmer climate gardeners can expect to find them easily and in a greater variety of cultivars. Online nurseries also have a greater variety of colors and species.

# Antirrhinum – Snapdragon

## Antirrhinum majus



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### **Asian societies believe the flowers resemble rabbit lips.**

Times have changed since I was a boy. Yes, the frequent changes in politics, technology, environmental degradation, climate change, social issues, and other matters immediately come to mind — but also to flowers. Of all the plants that I can measure as having undergone so many changes, it is this garden annual.

When I was a boy, “snaps” were tall, stately plants, grown extensively in flower gardens. I still remember my mother sowing the seeds and

transplanting them into the garden. Upon blooming, she would cut the stems to decorate the house.

The flowers provide easy interactive fun for children (and us childish adults.) The “jaws” of the tubular petals will snap shut when you open them with your fingers. I remember how enthralled I was by seeing bumblebees struggle to open the dragon’s jaws to climb into the floral throat only to disappear and then reappear as they emerge. That was innocent fun for an innocent age.

Historically, different countries had unique interpretations of what a snapdragon flower resembles. Oriental cultures viewed a blossom as the head and jaws of a dragon or as a less menacing goldfish mouth. In Northern Europe, snaps resembled a lion’s roaring mouth. This figment of one’s imagination is reminiscent of a Rorschach psychological test. Instead of analyzing weird-looking inkblot pictures, just use snapdragon flowers.

I dislike current varieties because breeders have made snaps smaller and more “open-mouthed.” They also place a greater emphasis on dwarf varieties. Instead of tall, imposing dragons, they are now small lizards. At some point in gardening history, people wanted flowering plants to be short. I always joked with friends that if a plant grew taller than their knees, there was a possibility of getting a nosebleed from the high altitude. Think about it.

A few varieties raised today have an imposing dragon-size stature, growing to three feet or taller. These are the types that make excellent cut flowers. They need to grow in plenty of sunlight, fertile soil, and, possibly, some stakes to keep them standing tall and proud. You don’t want a droopy dragon.

There are many fire-breathing-sized varieties available as seeds from online nurseries. Your local garden center will rarely have these available, for they usually sell the common gecko-sized types.

If you can find seeds — and better yet, transplantable-sized plants — you need to grow the F1 Hybrids of the **Rocket**, **Potomac**, or the

**Liberty Series.** These hybrid types have a full complement of colors, tall stems laden with blossoms, and bloom non-stop (with regular cutting) from midsummer to fall.

Cut off snapdragons when the lowermost blossoms begin to bloom on a stem. Eventually, newer flowers will open and will remain fresh in a vase for up to a week, possibly longer, with repeated water changes.

Florists caution that snaps have the tendency to curl or bend upward permanently if laid horizontally on a table or counter after cutting. I know that is strange, but keep the stems vertical at all times.

Like other flowers, snaps are very sensitive to warm indoor temperatures. Try to keep your bouquets away from warm air vents but near cool areas, such as by a shady windowsill, one not exposed to full sunlight.

Another precaution is the flowers will quickly die if you place the vase near ripening fruit, such as apples or bananas. The fruit releases slight amounts of ethylene gas as they ripen — just enough to make the flowers drop off the stems. If your neighborhood is plagued with troublesome fire-breathing dragons, lob a couple canisters of ethylene gas at them or a ton of overly ripe apples. That should make them leave.

# Calendula – Pot Marigold

## Calendula officinalis



**I guess the central question is, what can't this annual do?**

Marigold's common name is confusing since gardeners also call another, but an unrelated flower, a Marigold (technically called *Tagetes*), which we will review later.

Calendula has many varieties with flower colors ranging from bright yellows and vibrant oranges to mixed shades.

They make excellent cut flowers for the house with their long stems. With the standard cut flower care and maintenance, they should last for a week or more for enjoyment.

Their brightly colored petals are edible (caution: may be allergic to some people), adding vivid color to salads, rice dishes, soups, and stews. This culinary usage explains the common nickname of Pot Marigold. Craft folks also use them as a dye to add coloring to fabrics and as an application to skin lotions.

The flowers bloom in midsummer until a killing frost. They will self-seed, and new blossoms will grow and flourish next year. The plants are low maintenance, but the occasional clipping off of old flowers helps prevent excessive seed production. This will prompt more flowers to bloom during the summer. They will need plenty of sunlight and well-drained soil to grow well.

You can easily find unique colors and varieties in almost all seed catalogs and garden centers.

# Callistephus – China Aster

## Callistephus chinensis



**This is one of the best “Made in China” exports.**

What looks like an aster, chrysanthemum, and peony all at the same time? You don’t have to look any further than this delightful daisy-like annual. New varieties can temporarily confuse even experienced gardeners on what type of plant it is with their fluffy or billowy blossoms.

Native to China, North and South Korea, this colorful plant has delighted gardeners worldwide. Many people think of it as being an essential cottage garden inhabitant. The flowers can display single to double petals in a wide range of vivid colors, highlighted with a central

disk of bright yellow disk florets. The hybrid varieties will display flowers up to five inches in diameter.

All these descriptions are lovely on their own for growing them for cut flowers. Still, the best trait is them having long, sturdy stems culminating in a single flower. Over the summer, hybrid varieties can produce many stems for cutting.

Like many other annuals, these plants can germinate and grow quickly and, if prevented from forming seeds, can bloom for most of the summer. All of this depends on you providing the best growing conditions. They prefer to spend their days in as much sunshine and fertile, moist (but not constantly wet), well-drained soil.

Older varieties had a troubling habit of developing viral and fungal diseases when crowded together or grown in humid, partly shady areas. Newer varieties may occasionally experience this problem, but not as severe.

For cut flowers, grow these hybrid types, not only for their better disease resistance but also for those having longer, sturdier stems. Some varieties, such as the **Tower Series**, can grow to over three feet and are bushy. Their peony-like blossoms have a diverse range of colors. Each plant has the potential to produce many stems over the summer.

After enjoying them in the garden, cut plenty for your enjoyment in the house. By performing the usual repeat cut-in-water and daily water changes, you can expect more than a week's worth of a festive display.

# **Celosia – Cockscomb or Wool Flowers**

***Celosia argentea* var. *cristata*; *plumosa*; *spicata***



## **Something germinated from a Dr. Seuss book!**

I live close to a few Amish communities. During the summer, when they have their weekly livestock and auction sales, I will see Amish ladies selling bouquets of these highly colorful, but strange-looking flowers. Other times, they will sell them at roadside stands near their homes. While traveling around, you can see their gardens or outside boundaries of farm fields dotted with the glowing colors of these and other flowers.

I never understood why they grew so many of them. Maybe it is as simple as Celosia's common name of cockscomb or wool-flowers that

attracts the Amish. A garden flower resembling the fleshy crest on roosters or sheep's wool? Hey, why not? Well, anyway, they sell plenty of them. Good for you, ladies!

Other than being exceptionally pretty, Celosia is excellent for cut and dried flower arrangements. Its flowers differ in color, size, and shape but appear as furry velvet. In Mexico, for example, their nickname is "Velvet Flowers."

There are three species (and assorted hybrids) of Celosia flowers:

- For many people, the ***Celosia argentea var. cristata*** varieties flaunt pleasantly gaudy, rounded, folded, brain-shaped flowers on tall stems. A popular color is blood red or purplish-red — the reason for naming Celosia as cockscombs.
- Another species is ***spicata***, which has smaller, but abundant, spiky flowers which resemble heads of wheat.
- And third, the species called ***plumosa***, which the tiny flowers are airy, feathery, or resemble fire flames.

There are many varieties to choose from, either by seed or from purchased plants in garden centers. Raising them from seed is lengthy, so if you live in colder locations, your best plan is to buy plants.

All Celosias prefer to grow in sunny areas with well-drained soil. They dislike constant moist ground and clay-based soils. Adding sand or coarse gravel to a bed will help establish well-grown plants and abundant flowers for the picking.

For cut flowers, they will last for about a week using the standard daily requirements. Another method is to dry them for everlasting decorations. They will keep their vibrant colors if you dry them in an airy, dark location for a few weeks.

# **Centaurea – Bachelor Buttons or Cornflower**

**Centaurea cyanus**



**Today’s men’s fashions — if you can call it that — are so dull and “lifeless.”**

Gardeners have always considered this annual cottage garden plant a favorite for its intensely colorful flowers. Each plant will produce extensive summer displays, with the resultant long-lasting cut flowers for the house. However, it has not been ideal for farmers, for it grew like a weed in grain crops — wheat, oats, barley, and, as its name implies, corn. It is not much of a threat today, for there are far more invasive weeds to worry over.

It eventually became a cherished garden flower, for it is effortless to grow in any garden. The seeds are easy to sow — just scatter and lightly cover with the soil. The plants will thrive in well-drained, fertile soil and in as much sunlight as possible.

Cornflowers make beautiful cut flowers, for they can last a long time (possibly over a week) in a vase of water. They can have single to double petals, and the colors range from the intense blue to purple, pink, red, and brilliant white.

This flower reminds me of the old Hans Christian Andersen tale of the ugly duckling turning into a beautiful swan. No one liked this flower, but over time people eventually accepted it, possibly for producing so many flowers over the summer.

It was once a fashion accessory for men, associated with the insertion of a flower or a small bouquet into the buttonholes of men's jackets or coats, and became known as Bachelor's Buttons. That was a fashion statement from years ago and now considered "nerdy" or "effeminate" by today's standards.

The flowers are terrific for picking, especially since that fantastic blue color is so damn attractive. Hey, you can't have enough blue flowers in any garden!

Seeds of this annual are in almost all seed catalogs and garden centers. Some nurseries will even offer potted plants, but you get more bang for your buck by sowing lots of seeds in your garden.

# Chrysanthemum

## Chrysanthemum × morifolium



### **Pulling a rabbit out of a hat is for amateurs.**

Without a doubt, our common “mums” are one of the most long-lasting cut flowers for your home. They are a florist’s most versatile and popular arrangement-filling flowers for the public. Yes, roses always have top billing, but mums are cheaper, longer-lasting, and, dare I say, more cheerful-looking.

Many florists and growers report long-stemmed mums can remain fresh for up to a month if adequately cared for. Still, you need persistence in maintaining clean vase water, daily re-trimming of the stems, and follow-up treatments of preservative chemicals. Have no

preservatives? You may not have the month-long longevity, but you can expect at least two weeks of enjoyment.

You need not visit a flower shop to have boat-loads of ready-to-pick mums for your house. The key to successfully having long-lasting cut flowers is to grow long-stemmed varieties. Most garden mums are the mound-shaped cushion display types that are outstandingly beautiful for the garden — but they lack long stems. Yes, they would be excellent for small vases, but they will not last as long as the longer-stemmed types.

So, which ones should you try to find to grow in your garden? I wish I could give you a complete list of gorgeous varieties, but as each year changes, so do all flower names. My recommendation is to locate specialty nurseries, which specifically grow mum plants. They usually list those that grow best to form longer stems for cut flowers.

But don't give up on those already growing in your perennial garden. To strive for making your garden chrysanthemum plants develop longer stems, do not pinch-off any more of the secondary growth shoot tips after the first spring "clipping." By preventing more compact growth (usually, this is what you want for better mound-shaped garden displays), the recent side growth will develop longer stems by mid to late summer. Stake or support the clusters of stems to prevent them from flopping to the ground. Muddy flowers are not particularly appealing.

By late summer and well into the fall, you can have handfuls (possibly armfuls) of these delightfully colorful mega-daisies. Always use sharp scissors or a knife to cut the stems when the flowers are partially open. Over time, they will fully open up. Warm water is best to use when first submerging the stems.

Chrysanthemum flowers come in all shapes, sizes, and colors — except blue — but did you know florists sell blue-flowered ones by performing a magic trick? The trick is to grow pure white flowers and allow their stems to stand in a container of water mixed with concentrated blue food-coloring for a few days. As the thirsty flowers "suck up" the

colored water, the petals incorporate the pigment into their tissues. What you eventually see is blue to pale-blue or teal colored mums. To plan for Saint Patrick's Day, add concentrated green dye. You will have light-green or chartreuse green flowers in a few days.

You can do this presto-chango color trick with practically any white flowers picked from your garden, including carnations! Add some dyes together to get some really "funky 60s" tie-dye, Technicolor-esque displays. Groovy man!

# Coreopsis – Tickseed

**Coreopsis tinctoria; Coreopsis lanceolata**



**Wearing a flea and tick collar while gardening is optional.**

These attractive annual and perennial plants are wonderful to include in any cut flower garden. The perennial varieties are easy to grow, and once established in your garden, become a no-fuss, problem-free attraction.

Being a vibrant-colored member of the daisy family, it gets its unusual nickname of tickseed because of having its seeds resembling blood-engorged ticks. Oh, that's sick! The things people imagine are borderline disturbing.

Varieties now found in garden centers have stunning red, pink, orange, and vibrant yellow petals with additional bi-colors, bizarre stripes, and splotches — all on plants ranging in different heights. Heavens to Betsy, how can anyone decide what to plant in a garden?

An old, but still popular annual species, is the *Coreopsis tinctoria* or the **Plains Coreopsis**. Tall growing to over three feet, it sports a multitude of eye-catching bright yellow daisies with brownish-red centers. You will always find new plants sprouting each spring from its self-sown seeds.

For a perennial species/variety having pure yellow double flowers, you can't go wrong planting *Coreopsis lanceolata* '**Early Sunrise**'. It grows shorter and bushier, is easy to grow, and makes excellent cut flowers from your garden. It, and other similar varieties, is hardy from zones 4 to 9.

Coreopsis will bloom all summer if planted in full sunlight, and fertile, well-drained soil. They dislike clay-based soils and prefer a more sandy or gravelly medium.

Most of the annual and perennial varieties produce long, slender but sturdy stems — ideal for adding to mixed flower bouquets. Your bonus for growing these plants is there are usually over one flower per stem. Hey, more the merrier!

For best results, wait until the flowers are almost entirely open to cut them for indoor displays. After cutting the stems in the garden, make a fresh stem cut in the house while you submerge each stem in water to avoid air from entering the cut end. You can expect your Coreopsis flowers to last about a week (or more) with regular daily water changes.

For your garden plants, always deadhead spent flowers to prevent excessive seed formation, which can “shutdown” further flower production for the season.

# Cosmos

## Cosmos bipinnatus



**Carl Sagan would have loved this flower.**

Oh my goodness, I must caution you, for there must be a zillion hybrid varieties in this colorful group of annuals. Their descriptions will overwhelm you if you read the seed catalogs (either in print or online) and try to decide with ones to grow in your garden.

As a relative in the immense daisy family, botanists say Cosmos is “ridiculously easy” to grow in any garden and rewarding you with a windfall of stunning ever-blooming flowers.

The blossoms usually have long stems — perfect for all summer and fall cutting and picking — held high above the attractive fern or feather-like

foliage. Even this foliage makes beautiful filler material for a vase.

Most plants can grow to over three feet tall and quickly fill in an area over the summer.

To add bonus points, these plants can easily tolerate general neglect, such as less watering and thriving in less fertile ground. If you pamper them with kindness — watch out — they will bloom themselves silly. As long as they grow in mostly sunny areas, they will bloom all summer and into the fall.

You can expect a wide range of colors (except blue) from pure yellow to white, pink, red, orange, and many bicolors with contrasting or alternating striped petals. Most types display single petals, but semi to fully-double varieties are now being bred.

Your local garden center will have packets of seeds available for you to purchase. For more colorful varieties, purchase from online seed nurseries.

For a recommendation, some growers report **Sensation Mix** provides very long stems, with some averaging over three feet tall. Yes, over three feet! There are plenty of stunning pinks, rose, white and bi-colors, to brighten your home, both indoors and outside in the garden.

For those of you preferring semi and fully double flowers, the variety called **Double Click Mix**, with an assortment of bright colors, will keep you busy cutting and cutting again.

Most Cosmos flowers last in the vase for nearly a week or two with regular water changes. Some cut-flower growers suggest cutting your flowers when they partially open up or begin to flex outward for best results.

# Dahlia

## Dahlia hybrida



### **Size matters in gardening.**

From midsummer until the killing frosts of fall, you can depend on this tuberous perennial to provide plenty of colorful flower-heads to brighten your garden and inside your house.

Since the hybridization of the original species found in Mexico and Central to South America, a wide diversity of shapes, sizes, and colors of these plants grace our gardens. There are countless single to double-petal varieties, each having different sizes of flower diameters, plant growth, and stem sturdiness.

While growing them outside and enjoying them in the garden is easy, keeping those flowers “fresh as a daisy,” indoors can be a challenge. Don’t fret; keeping them as cut flowers will take more effort, but the rewards of enjoying them in your house are worth any additional labor.

You would think such large and thick-petaled blossoms would last forever in a vase, but some authorities question how long. Some growers give a wide range of time — from a couple days to, possibly, a couple weeks — if you are lucky. Like many other flowers, it may depend on the variety for how long a flower will last in a vase.

From my research, I haven’t been able to pin-point those varieties that surpass others as being excellent cut flower candidates. The double-petal (or sometimes called ball-shaped) types may be longer-lasting as cut flowers.

There are ways to “cheat the system” to extend the life of your Dahlia cut flowers. Forget about raising those small, seed-raised varieties. You will need to grow the larger plants — some types, up to four feet tall — with dinner-plate-sized flowers held up by strong, long stems.

Unlike other garden flowers for cutting, you should not cut Dahlias at the “plump” bud stage, but when the flowers are fully open. If cut at the bud-stage, the petals will not become fully open but remain closed. After snipping off the long stem, remove all lowermost leaves and re-cut the stem when placed underwater. This prevents an air-seal barrier from forming to keep water from being drawn upward into those enormous flowers. Like all other cut flowers, change the vase water daily.

Don’t bother growing Dahlias from seed because they are a jangled genetic-mess of irregularities. Instead, raise them from tubers purchased from garden centers or specialty nurseries for best colors and flower head sizes.

# Daucus – Queen Anne’s Lace and Dara

## Daucus carota



**As Bugs Bunny says, “What’s up, Doc?”**

Our common roadside and farm field weeds can supply potential cut flowers for your home. One such weed is Queen Anne’s Lace (or Wild Carrot) with its broad, lacy, white florets clumped together called an umbel. Yes, you can cut their long, stiff stems, which can last up to a week in a vase — longer if you add powdered preservative chemicals.

The trouble with this plant is it’s very invasive. All those tiny blossoms also form many seeds that spread willy-nilly across the land. But there is a form called **Dara**, which is “relatively” safe to grow in your garden and is even better as a cut flower. Gardeners’ opinions differ if it is less

invasive. For safety' sake, clip off spent flower stalks before their seeds become ripe.

Dara has surprising, if not eye-opening, purple, pale burgundy, old rose to pink, flower clusters. Queen Anne's Lace can grow to over four feet tall, but this type grows less tall but is bushier. You can grow it from seed, sown either in early spring or fall, for it acts as a hardy annual or a biennial. Blooming begins in early summer until fall, so you can have lots of stems to cut.

Like Annie's Lace, Dara prefers to grow in very well-drained soil and sunny areas. Try not to make the soil too fertile because it will limit flower production in favor of more feathery or ferny leaves.

For cut flowers — you know the drill — use fresh water and re-cut the stems daily. One bonus is Dara can become included in dried arrangements.



*Ammi majus* – CC0 Photo courtesy of Pixabay.com

Hey, let's complicate matters by adding another member of the carrot family. This relation to Queen Anne's Lace is ***Ammi majus*** or **Bishop's Weed** (also called Bishop's Flower) shown above.

Like Dara, growers commonly refer to this plant as False Queen Anne's Lace. The flower umbels look similar to Annie's Lace, possibly being smaller but also being brighter white. This plant also grows in similar habitat conditions. Look for the variety called **Graceland** sold by larger garden centers and nurseries.

You can also use this plant for cut and dried flowers arrangements. Many florists refer to it as being an excellent "filler material" to highlight other flowers in bouquets.

One word of caution is the stem sap can cause allergic reactions. Your skin, especially when exposed to sunlight, may become very irritated to form painful blisters. When planting and cutting this plant, please wear gloves.

Who knew our common orange grocery vegetable had so much potential for garden and home decoration enjoyment? Now you know.

# Dianthus – Carnations

## Dianthus caryophyllus



**A plant you can't refuse to grow for cut flowers.**

These perennial plants are colorful and fragrant, ideal for planting in front of beds, borders, and containers. The word *Dianthus* means flower-of-the-gods or god-flower. It is god-flower, not Godfather!

What seems like eons ago, my sister and I would stop at a nearby florist every Valentine's Day. We would purchase a dozen long stem, bright red, and white, "huge" carnations for our mother. Yeah, red roses were too expensive, but Mama loved those enormous scented carnations.

No matter how she grew carnations in the garden, they never mirrored the ones sold in the florist shop. The trouble was, those types were

genetically superior to the common seed-raised garden varieties. The florist types grow in greenhouses to provide those long, sturdy stems and large flowers.

Oh well, Mama enjoyed growing a few of the common **Chabaud Carnation** varieties — still found today in many seed catalogs — for their pleasant colors and pervading clove-scent. Now and then, she picked some during the summer to place in small vases. You can also do this with many seed-grown varieties.

For some bonus points on creativity with cut flowers, purchase the **Picotee Mix Carnations** found in several seed catalogs. The fully-double fragrant petals have a base color highlighted with streaks and stripes of white or contrasting color. Very attractive!

The Dianthus family includes not only carnations but also smaller growing Pinks and Sweet Williams. They, too, are for cut-flower use, and seed catalogs and nursery centers provide several types to purchase.

Depending on the species and varieties, most Dianthus can display well in a vase for up to 14 days. The florist carnations can, with repeated water changes and with the addition of chemical preservatives, can stretch this longevity for another week or more.

No matter how long they will endure, let's enjoy them!

# Echinacea – Coneflower

## Echinacea purpurea



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### **A band-aid on your nose is not attractive.**

Echinacea derives its name from the Greek “echinos” meaning “hedgehog” for its spiky center cone. Be careful when smelling the sweet fragrance for those bristles are prickly to the nose. Ouch!! Although the colorful petals steal the floral show, these bristly cones can have a lovely iridescence in the sunlight.

Coneflowers thrive in the scorching sun, and dry soil. Their enormous flowers bloom in late June and continue all summer. They will look

rather untidy, so clip off spent flowers. They can grow to over two or three feet tall and are hardy from zones 3 to 10.

These plants are country wildflowers that have made it to the top of the perennial pop charts. One reason is, there is a popular notion that 'medicinal' extracts from them cures or prevents everything from the common cold to depression. I suggest growing these in your garden to enjoy their beauty; this helps more in easing the 'blues.'

The colorful varieties offered today are nothing like the ones grown in your great-grandmother's garden. Years ago, it was under-appreciated, but that has all changed. Hybridizers or plant breeders woke up to its exciting possibilities and made an excellent plant even better.

There are several new varieties available for your garden based on new flower colors and fragrances not found in the older species-based plants. Be prepared to experience a fresh way to enjoy and grow these hardy and dependable perennials.

One other quality is they make excellent cut flowers for indoor bouquets. The stems are rigid and straight, although rough and slightly prickly. The blossoms will last well over a week or two from daily vase water changes. They can also be used in dried-flower arrangements by allowing the stem and flowers to dry slowly in a dark location.

Okay, these flowers are gorgeous and fragrant — what do I recommend for you to grow in your garden? Get whatever colorful variety you can find! There are many outstanding cultivars offered; it is challenging to narrow down one or two types. Many of these are available as plants by several mail-order nurseries and larger garden centers.

Try to avoid seed-grown strains, for they revert to the species genetic characteristics and lack the outstanding color and blossom shapes of the newer varieties.

# **Eucalyptus – Silver Dollar Eucalyptus**

## **Eucalyptus cinerea**



**One requirement in keeping a Koala as a house pet is to grow this plant.**

Although this ebook is about growing and displaying garden cut flowers, some plants provide perfect credentials for viewing excellent leaf displays in a vase. Sometimes, they go the extra mile of enjoyment when the leaves dry and still look (and in this plant's case, smell) attractive. Leafy plants will provide what florists call filler-material to hide the naked stems of floral displays.

These Australian native trees (hardy only to zones 9 or 10) have that unique fragrance we can identify with when having a cold or the flu.

They are one of the principal ingredients for the medications to ease a sore throat, stuffy nose, or a persistent cough.

One common species, nicknamed the **Silver Dollar Eucalyptus**, has rounded, silver dollar-sized leaves attached around the stem. The leaves are a dull, silver-gray, and when dried, we can still smell that characteristic fragrance.

This plant thrives in full sunlight, well-drained soil, and occasional neglect. You can use it as either freshly cut stems inserted into water (having a vase life of nearly a month) or leave them to dry and later add to an empty vase.

Seeds and plants are available at many garden centers and in seed catalogs. The advantage of growing your own plants is they always regrow after cutting a stem. You can plant them into a large container or in the flower bed, but make sure you cut a few stems in the summer and air dry them for creating scented indoor displays.

# Gomphrena – Globe Amaranth

## Gomphrena globosa



**Maybe it needs to hire a better publicity agent.**

Some garden plants will never gain notoriety, even if they are easy to grow and produce colorful flowers. This unfortunate annual has all the qualifications of grandeur but eclipsed by our common bedding plants.

The strange part of this apparent lack of interest is that, historically, it has always been a welcomed inhabitant in flower gardens worldwide for several years. Although gardeners enjoy it, no one seems overly ecstatic about its colorful and easy to grow merits as compared to petunias and impatiens.

There now appears to be a revival of interest in these plants, for breeders and growers are rearranging genes to make these plants more eye-appealing to gardeners.

The flowers have a passing resemblance to clover flower-heads. They have a limited range of color — from pinkish-red to purple, and to white. One outstanding new variety is **Strawberry Fields**, having bright red flowers. Other prime growers for your garden are **Lavender Lady** with vibrant purple petals, and **Fireworks**, having fluorescent pinkish-rose blossoms.

Globe Amaranth is one of those easy-to-grow annuals that thrive in sunny, hot and dry locations. It is native to the southwestern areas of the United States and Mexico. Once it blooms, there is no stopping it until a fall frost.

Although they make excellent cut flowers lasting about a week in a vase, you can also turn them into everlasting flowers (like Lavender) by slowly drying them. They retain their color but are not as bright. Well, no matter, for they will remain beautiful for a long time.

# Gypsophila – Baby’s Breath

## *Gypsophila paniculata*



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**The only thing to change is the vase-water and not a diaper.**

Instead of concentrating on large cut-flowers, how about we look at stems having many smaller blossoms?

This plant adds a beautiful contrast to the main-event flower (such as red roses) with its small, white, puffy blossoms. These blossom-laden stems act as important filler material for bridal and get-well-soon bouquets. You can also grow it alone for their airy clusters of tiny snowball-like attraction.

This perennial species, and the all-time favorite double petaled variety called **Bristol Fairy**, is hardy from zones 5 (possibly 4) to 8. That sounds great, but it depends on it growing in favorable locations. Those conditions include planting it in well-drained, lime-based soil and sunny areas. Constant wet, clay-based soil will kill them.

The limey soil requirement can present problems with other plants growing in your garden. Many growers recommend placing Gypsophila on its own in another area of a garden or grow alongside other lime-loving perennials, such as Dianthus.

One crucial fact to consider when adding these plants to a garden is they form long tap-roots. Make sure you do not disturb these roots, for doing so might kill them.

You can raise this plant by sowing seeds; unfortunately, the resultant plants do not compare in quality with nursery offered vegetatively propagated cultivars like **Bristol Fairy**. It blooms heavily over the summer — making lots of cut-flowers — and grows up to three to four feet tall and wide. That's one BIG baby!

For fresh-cut flowers (using the regular changing of water routine), their long stems can remain in a vase for up to a week. Cut the stems when the lowermost blossoms bloom.

There are other species and varieties of Gypsophila, with many having small to large single petal blossoms. Some types even have pale to bright pink flowers! These types grow smaller and may prove challenging to be adequate for cut-flower use unless you include them in smaller vases with other flowers.

# Helianthus – Sunflower

**Helianthus annuus; Helianthus tuberosus**



**What once was old is new again.**

Over the past few years, there has been a tremendous increase in breeding work on transforming our old farm-yard, drooping, large seed-headed daisy. This single-headed flower is still popular, but a new ensemble of multi-headed varieties are now available to produce cut flowers for your home. Not only do these plants produce many flower stems, but the daisy-like flowers have gorgeous “hot and fiery” colors not considered likely decades ago.

Multi-stemmed sunflowers were Mother Nature’s original design in our wild species. One common native wildflower is *Helianthus tuberosus*,

which grows in the western and central regions of North America. All annual varieties grown today came from this perennial species.

Generations ago, single-stemmed, mega-seeded flowers were for agricultural purposes, specifically for pressing the seed kernels into cooking oil, and later for birdseed production. A later admiration of the enormous flowers resulted from the increased leisure activity of flower gardening.

New varieties of multi-stemmed sunflowers are available to gardeners each year. Why do breeders develop these plants? One reason is for limited-space gardeners to grow them. Another reason is by advances in genetics with the development of new pollen-less varieties. Breeders develop these varieties to tap into the cut-flower market. The common bright yellow sunflowers drop considerable amounts of pollen onto shiny, Pledge® - covered tables. Sort of messy, but these new pollen-less types prevent constant clean up.

Flower color has also taken an enormous leap in creating many earth-shades — from classic yellow to white, orange, red, garnet-red to an almost black. I can't even describe all the variations of color patterns, along with flower and plant sizes!

For cut-flowers for your house, please grow the new multi-stem, multi-flower varieties. They have attention-getting colors, easier to snip off stems, and for being pollen-less. There are several varieties to choose from, such as **Moulin Rouge** (or **Chianti Hybrid**) having dark garnet to “almost black” petals. **Ruby Eclipse** has a black interior surrounded by ruby-red and white petals, and **Moonshadow** sports a black center surrounded by pale yellow to white petals. Look for these selected varieties and more from many online seed companies.

Florists recommend cutting these smaller sunflowers with a sharp knife when the flowers are almost fully open. Try to cut the stems in the early morning when the temperatures are cooler. Remove the lowermost leaves before placing them in a wide bottom, sturdy vase.

You can expect your sunflowers to last for over a week if you change the water in the vase each day and perform an extra re-cut to refresh the stem end.

# Hydrangea – French Hydrangeas

## Hydrangea macrophylla



**It's a wonder I didn't burn down the chemistry labs.**

Growers label these plants as being perennials or semi-woody shrubs. They begin growth as being herbaceous, like any other perennial, but later transform into woody hollow stems by fall. They are hardy to zones 5 to 9, but lesser zones are problematic.

These plants always remind me of my old high school and college chemistry classes. It involves determining whether an unknown solution had an acidic or basic pH. I would perform an experiment using a pH identification chemical. If the solution turned pink, it represented a basic solution while blue determined it was acidic. The

intensity of the colors represented how low or high the pH value. I loved chemistry experiments involving colors. Mathematical equations were, unfortunately, my downfall.

Hydrangea “flowers” have a similar method of showing distinct colors when grown in different soil pH levels. What we think as being flowers are bracts or modified leaves. The real flower structures are small and in the center of these bracts.

To make the prominent bracts blue, we need to acidify the soil by adding aluminum sulfate. To turn them pink, we need to add lime (calcium carbonate) to the soil. The more we add either of these soil additives, the deeper the color of the bracts. I advise a word of caution when adding these chemicals to your garden soil. They can damage or “sicken” surrounding plants from the significant change of the soil pH.

What happens to Hydrangeas having white bracts? Here, you do not need to add the chemicals, for the plants will remain white no matter what the soil’s pH is. Never exclude a white blooming Hydrangea in any garden, for they can illuminate partially shady areas during the summer.

One old variety, called **Annabelle**, has large, brilliant white flower-heads in June and July but slowly changes to chartreuse by fall. My mother grew these in a shaded area near the old farmhouse years ago for cut-flower displays. This older variety does not care what the pH is of the soil. As long as it is growing in well-drained, fertile soil, it will thrive with little attention. It can grow to almost three feet tall and twice as wide as it develops its flowers on the growing stems.

This plant and all other varieties of Hydrangeas will eventually lose their colors and fade. Still, they will make excellent dried arrangements for decorative crafts. I love multipurpose flowers!

Severe cold conditions will kill the new growth buds on older Hydrangea stems. You must also be careful when pruning these plants. Cut them back at the wrong time of the year, and it will delay flowering for two years. My advice is to leave them alone. But new varieties on the

market show great promise of easing fears of not “messing things up” when pruning. They bloom on current growing stems and also provide longer enjoyment from spring to fall.

We are experiencing an exciting time in gardening concerning these plants. Older Hydrangeas usually bloom only in the late spring, with a few rare, sporadic flower clusters during the summer. Today’s varieties now bloom from new growth all summer with either large blue or pink flower-heads depending on the pH of your garden soil.

One aptly named variety, called **Endless Summer**, has outstanding displays all summer. There are other varieties with similar names, but they all have this repeat blooming capability. This variety can grow to over three feet tall and wide and has sturdy stems to hold up the massive blooms.

So, what is the best procedure in cutting and keeping these large, colorful bouquets fresh for indoor pleasure? Hydrangeas can be tricky in maintaining freshness in a vase, especially if you do not follow proper protocols.

As with all other cut flowers, the keyword and “obsession” with Hydrangeas is water. They can’t seem to get enough of it. Even when growing in a garden, they need to be well hydrated to keep all those large leaves and mop-headed flower bracts from wilting. What could cause trouble in enjoying these plants by being cut and placed in a vase full of water?

Growers and florists discovered two unique problems that can prevent Hydrangeas from being successful cut flowers. One problem is cutting stems too early just as the first bracts show color. These “blooms” need to be older and “firmer” to the touch. Your safe bet is to wait for the whole rounded head to be at its best display and then cut its stem. If you cut the heads when young, they will stop further development, both in size and color.

To complicate matters, if you cut a stem and dunk it into a vase of water, the stem (and leaves if you wish a few to remain on the stem) will later

wilt. No matter what you do, such as daily water changes and performing fresh cuts, the darn things will still wilt. One reliable solution, (as with most other cut flowers) is to re-cut the stems while you submerge them in water. This prevents an “airlock plug” at the stem end to form. This plug prevents water from percolating upward toward the flower-bract end.

Some cut flower growers offer another solution, a surprising one, using alum, a substance found in the grocery spice or baking aisle used for making pickles. Applying alum powder to the stem’s freshly cut end may prevent a glutinous or sticky sealant gel from forming on the cut-end. This gel also prevents water from flowing upward into the leaves and flower-heads. The idea sounds reasonable, but I have found no corroborating evidence if this solution actually works.

If you can prevent wilting, most Hydrangeas can last well over a week or more. If not, don’t despair, for they can also be air-dried to form everlasting floral decorations.

# Lathyrus – Sweet Pea

## Lathyrus odorata



*“There are few pleasures like really burrowing one's nose into sweet peas.”*

— Angela Thirkell

If you have limited horizontal garden space, you will always have unlimited vertical real estate to grow flowers. Yes, they have to be climbing vines, but some can produce beautiful cut flowers. One such vine is the popular Sweet Pea.

Most varieties not only have vivid colors but also exude an intense, sweet perfume. Although they last for an average of five days in a vase, there are plenty more stems to cut in the garden. That is until summer's

heat ends production. This sensitivity to heat limits Sweet Peas from growing well.

In my corner of the world, winter transforms into summer within a few days and limits enjoyment of these plants. Although they prefer to grow during the coolness of spring, the vines can still provide a magnificent display if grown in well-drained, moist, fertile soil in early or late summer.

Many growers suggest sowing Sweet Pea seed in your flower gardens as early as possible — even if the soil is cold and wet. Eventually, those seeds will sprout and grow up a trellis or woven-wire fence you will remember to add when sowing the seeds.

For cut flowers, try to grow the old-fashion **Grandiflora** strains for their outstanding scent. The more modern varieties (especially the unique ones bred by New Zealander, Dr. Keith Hammett) provide more unusual colors (also with fragrance) and improved cutting longevity.

When they bloom, cut a long stem as possible when the lowermost blossoms bloom. Like all other cut-flowers, please change the vase water daily and make a fresh cut on each stem. Their vase life may last only a few short days, but that makes them special to enjoy their outstanding colors and fragrance.

# Lavandula – Lavender

## Lavandula angustifolia



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### **The perfume industry in Provence, France, calls them “Blue Gold.”**

You cannot help having an enormous smile on your face after inhaling the fresh scent from these essential herbs. This glorious fragrance was (and still is) used in many products needing a warm, long-lasting, and pleasing aroma. Well, that’s a significant reason for including them as cut flowers for any home.

The enjoyment can continue later, for you can convert them into everlasting cut flowers when dried. So, logically, you need not add water to a vase — just cut the stems and add them to any container.

For garden enjoyment, Lavender loves hot, dry, gravelly areas. Please, don't pamper these plants with fertilizer and regular watering. Fewer applications will go a long way in providing healthy, hardy, and happy plants. Most varieties are hardy from zones 5 to 9. Grow them in full sunlight with well-drained, limestone-enriched soil.

Two excellent varieties to grow are **Grosso** and **Provence** Lavender. The other name of the Grosso variety is "**Fat Spike**." It is not a street gang nickname but refers to the large, plump flower spikes. The blossom color of both types is dark violet, and the foliage is silvery green.

Raising these types is essential in the perfume fields of the Grosso and Provence Valleys of France. Countless acres of highly fragrant purple-blue blossoms smother the landscape, eventually harvested and processed to extract precious quantities of perfume worth more than gold.

You can find these variations and others in many garden centers and mail-order nurseries. Why travel to France to see and smell these enjoyable plants when they can grow in your garden and add a delightful scent inside the house? Try to grow as many plants your garden area can spare.

## Leucanthemum – Shasta Daisy

*Leucanthemum x superbum* or *Chrysanthemum X superbum*



**Performing “petal-ectomies” — the practice of plucking off daisy petals to determine if a love-interest is sincere.**

Let’s face it — other than roses, this has to be the predominant, long-lasting cut-flower of historical significance. With so many flowers blooming from spring through summer, there are plenty to pick! If a vase full of these flowers doesn’t make you smile, what will?

The American horticulturist, and plant breeder extraordinaire, Luther Burbank (1849 to 1926), had a brilliant idea. He wished to breed a new daisy, one that behaved itself and not become weedy. He wanted one

that was hardy, floriferous, and grew best in a garden instead of “in the wild.” After 17 years of exhaustive breeding work, he created the world-famous **Shasta Daisy**, named after Mount Shasta in California.

Seventeen years of laborious breeding work to create a new flower — think of that!

Today, the large daisies sold in garden centers and those grown in our gardens are variations of his stunning plant. Being of wild heritage stock, this perennial is hardy and versatile in whatever soil types and conditions. As long as they grow in plenty of sunlight, these plants will thrive.

I could have included this perennial within the section on Chrysanthemums (which it is related to). Still, this plant has no competition for being a perfect example of a cut flower with long-lasting enjoyment. Just look at them! They will make any room feel more enjoyable to be in.

You can grow these perennials from seed, but purchasing plants (like **Shasta** and other newer varieties) can give quicker and longer blooming.

They are hardy from zones 4 to 9 and love to bask in full to partial sunlight. Make sure you raise them in well-drained, fertile soil for best growth and bloom.

For cut flower use — as advised once again with all other plants in this ebook — change the vase water daily along with an additional small fresh cut of the stems.

# Moluccella – Bells of Ireland

## Moluccella laevis



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**Lisa Simpson will know what binomial nomenclature means.**

Here is an unusual, hardy perennial (zones 6 to 9) or annual enjoyed by countless gardeners worldwide. It is one of those “out of sight, out of mind” flowers — if you can call them flowers. What appears to be clusters of bell-shaped green blossoms is leaves called calyxes (or sepals). The real blossoms are tiny, usually white, and nestled inside the calyxes. They also have a fresh, but light, sweet fragrance.

Historically, this plant received its name (mistakenly, it seems) from Linnaeus, the guy who developed the Latinize binomial nomenclature

of naming plants and animals. He described it as being native to the Indonesian Molucca Islands.

Mr. Linnaeus also coined their familiar name of *Bells of Ireland* since the flower spikes and bracts reminded him of church bells throughout Ireland. Actually, he was off by several thousand miles because this plant is native to the regions around Turkey and southern Russia. Linnaeus, you're slipping, man. Get with the program.

What makes florists giddy over this plant is not only its emerald green color but also as "filler material" for including in floral arrangements. One day, eons ago, I was at a funeral service and looked at the floral displays for the dear departed — who I don't now recall. Tucked amongst the carnations, chrysanthemums, and lilies were stems of this unusual plant. I remember thinking the florist added weird-looking weeds. Later, since I was curious about identifying that "weed," I learned that it was a commonly grown garden plant. To borrow a word from Homer Simpson, "***D'oh!***"

Anyway, back to the fundamental point of this discussion about cut flowers, *Moluccella*, when grown in a sunny and well-drained, fertile area of the garden, can tower to about three feet with several side branches containing many sepal-bell stems.

As with all other cut flower candidates mentioned in this ebook, cut the stems in the morning and later re-cut them again before placing them in a vase. They can remain there (if daily replenished with freshwater) for over a week. You can use them alone (if you cater to the unusual look) or, as practiced by florists, tuck alongside with other cut flowers in a vase.

You can raise this plant in your garden from seed, but it will need a period of cold soil conditions to germinate. Some of the larger garden centers may have starter plants available for transplanting.

# Paeonia – Peony

## Paeonia lactiflora



### **There's something fishy about this plant.**

These enduring perennials, noted for their large and fluffy flowers on leafy stems, bloom from late spring to early summer.

Unlike many perennials in this ebook, we have a short season of enjoyment of their massive flowers. You may think, "*why bother growing them?*" Well, the answer lies in experiencing the gorgeous colors and scents of those billowy flowers. For cut-flower use, just one humongous blossom can fill any stout vase.

Peonies represent the advice of "less is more." Florists can combine several flowers together, and the display will look fantastic. Most of us,

though, can use one enormous flower to create instant visual and olfactory pleasure. Please don't use tall, slender vases for they will topple over even with one mega-sized flower.

The older the Peony plant, the more flowers you can eventually harvest — but don't overdo it. One large blossom can last for nearly a week under the usual method of daily water changes and stem cuts.

You may think cutting a fully developed flower is all it takes. Still, florists recommend cutting a stem just as the flower petals open up. If cut while immature as a bud, it may not unfurl and remain forever as a bud.

Over countless years of breeding, Peony blossoms have become larger and heavier. So heavy, the flower stems can bend over to the ground. Not lovely when covered in mud, but what can a gardener do? One easy method is to purchase metal support rings (something similar to tomato cage wire hoops) to hold the developing flower stems and buds upright. Once done, enjoy the outstanding colors and fragrances of your Peonies.

Many varieties have rich scents such as lemons, roses, honey, spices, and musk. Sometimes, a hybrid type may reek of rotting fish. Do extensive research before purchasing any peony, so you don't get something smelling so disgusting.

Not to alarm you, but know that the buds attract ants and aphids, so carefully examine each bud before bringing it into the house. If you find them, a thorough wash of soapy water followed by a warm rinse will eliminate them.

To get started in enjoying future cut-flowers, in as early as four years, plant all peonies in full sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. They are hardy from zones 3 to 8.

Almost all garden centers have peonies available as bare roots or grown in containers. Online nurseries offer old heirloom and gorgeous modern varieties. All varieties, no matter having double or single petals,

are great for providing you fantastic beauty, not only in your garden but also on an indoor table.

# Papaver – Corn Poppy and Bread Seed Poppy

**Papaver rhoeas; somniferum**



**Let's have some fun with botanical pyrotechnics!**

Unlike most other cut flowers, Poppies need an extra, if not dramatic, preparation for cutting — that is, to sear or cauterize the cut end with a flame. Before I explain further about this procedure, let me explain what to grow and why they make such an outstanding garden and cut flower subject.

Most Poppy species and varieties can act as annuals, biennials, and perennials if you can sow their tiny seeds on the ground in the early

spring. Other authorities suggest sowing them in late summer or early fall. Almost all develop better if you scatter the seed on the soil and not cover them.

Let's begin with a common, but delightful species, with a lengthy history of cultivation, not specifically for horticultural reasons but as a weed in agriculture crops.

This poppy is *Papaver rhoeas*, commonly called the **Corn Poppy**. Once considered a nuisance agricultural weed, today, these poppies spread via escaped seed from garden plantings or intentionally sowed for roadside plantings for beautification. Nothing can compare to this eye-catching historical plant when they bloom into vibrant red flowers.

They bloom from spring to midsummer, depending on your location and climate.

Let it be this memorable and glorious flower if you feel the need to sow and grow a low maintenance weed in your flower gardens. It is a commonly grown poppy. I love how it will pop-up here-and-there in a garden every spring from its self-sown seed.

One other entertaining poppy is a perennial but also treated as an annual, for it will bloom quickly from seed sown in the spring. It is *Papaver somniferum*, known as the **Opium Poppy** or **Bread Seed Poppy**. You may think you are about to embark on a clandestine operation as an opium gardener but fear not, for these are not the "high-octane" plants grown in some areas of the world. Most of these garden poppy varieties produce little significant amounts of milky latex to form opium.

The species Latin name means 'to bring on sleep,' since we derive the drug morphine from the plant, but the fantastic color of their flowers will keep you wide-eyed awake. Many single to double-flowered varieties (several with blossoms up to four to five inches in diameter) are available in shades of white, red, pink, purple, and stunning bicolors. They self-seed a-plenty and bloom from early to midsummer.

You can never go wrong in having poppies growing in your garden. You can find these seeds in many seed catalogs and in garden centers.

Now, let's review the technique of using fire to burn the stem end before plunging it into a vase of water. Your immediate question is, "*why on earth do this weird thing?*" and the answer is to stop the latex sap from flowing out the injured stem. You can:

- Use a candle flame (too old-fashioned),
- Apply a struck match (too cumbersome),
- Fire-up your kitchen gas stove burner (have a team of paramedics on standby),
- Or, use a butane lighter (like those for lighting an outdoor gas grill)

right after you cut a poppy stem in the garden. You need not burn the ends to a crisp — just apply the flame to the cut end for a couple seconds.

The best stems to cut are of those poppies beginning to open their petals. After searing the ends, plunge them into a bucket of water. Then, when in the house, you can place them in a vase of cold water. Unlike other flowers, there is no need to re-cut the stem ends. If you do, then you have to burn the ends once again.

Different species of poppies will have a different time of vase freshness. Off-hand, I would estimate a few days of indoor enjoyment. With so many new poppies blooming in the garden, there will be plenty of extra ones to "slash 'n' burn" for future bouquets.

# Rosa – Roses

## Rosa hybrida



### **When was the last time you had an epiphany holding a rose?**

When you visualize cut flowers in a vase, it doesn't stretch your imagination too far by thinking of roses. Many of our flowering herbaceous garden plants have semi-rigid stems, but roses take a little more work in preparing them for residing in a vase. This is because of them being woody shrubs. Their stems usually have trouble conducting water without the aid of their roots.

Because of this "woodiness," the longevity of a cut rose only lasts for less than a week. Oh well, plenty of time to admire its beauty and, hopefully, fragrance, if it has any. No matter what pretty rose grows in

your garden, clip off a stem, then re-cut it underwater in the house. Then place them in a vase of cold water and, if available, a packet of preservative powder.

Instead of purchasing a dozen expensive roses from your local florist, can you cut stems off our garden tea roses and other varieties? Yes, but most will not have long stems but are adequate for small vases. Nor will they produce plenty of recurring bloom during the summer and fall. They will have several painful thorns or prickles.

Over the past few years, new ever-bearing landscape roses (such as the stunning **David Austin English Shrub Roses**) have great potential for all-summer blooming cut-flowers. Other excellent candidates include several more modern hybrid tea roses.

Florists obtain roses grown only for making cut flowers instead of becoming garden shrubs. Here, I will relate to you the history of one old-fashion or heirloom rose that became the template of future cut roses for the florist trade.

The following account is from my ebook on heirloom roses called "***Your Antique Rose Garden.***" Yes, this is a blatant, selfish-self-promotion, but I feel it helps to explain how long-stemmed cut-flower roses became so popular.

It began by the accidental breeding of a new class of roses called Hybrid Perpetuals in the early to the mid-19th century. Unlike older garden roses, which would bloom only once per year, this new type can bloom sporadically over most of the summer. One Hybrid Perpetual rose became known as **General Jacqueminot**. From here, I will quote a passage from my ebook:

*"Rose growers call this rose "General Jack" for simplicity and possibly because many cannot speak French. ...This great rose, created in 1853, was in honor of a General in Napoleon's Army. Although it has a massive bloom in the early summer, it will re-bloom well into the fall. This rose is the parent of our modern Hybrid Tea roses.*

*It forms an impressive (Generals always like being referred to as being impressive) five-foot-tall bush. The double blossoms are very fragrant, and the silky petals are garnet or crimson red, changing to a dark rose-pink.*

*The flower stems are much longer than all other varieties grown, and this trait caused florists to jump up and down with joy. Well, not really, but they realized it would allow them to sell the first long stem roses to the public.*

*Then, they had an epiphany (the mother of all big ideas) – if this variety can form long stems, maybe future roses can do the same. So, new breeding ideas came about to develop fragrant, long stem roses, especially for florists, instead of for gardeners. Roses of all colors with long stems to sell. SWEET! So, when you purchase a dozen red roses from your local florist, thank General Jack (the rose) for making your purchase and enjoyment possible.”*

My haphazard account of long-stem rose history does not imply roses were never used for indoor displays before the availability of the above rose. All roses became cut flowers but inserted in small vases because of their short stem size. Take an inquisitive look at famous old paintings to view how artists depicted roses displayed in small vases.

The long stems of General Jack and progeny changed things forever, especially for the florists' trade.

# Rudbeckia – Black-eyed Susan

*Rudbeckia fulgida and Rudbeckia hirta*



**A long-blooming prairie home companion.**

You have probably seen these bright, three-inch diameter, yellow or orange daisies blooming in parks, public gardens, office building plantings, and in your neighbor's flower beds or borders. *"Those flowers are beautiful,"* you thought, but gave no further attention until now. Not only do they highlight a flower garden for most of the summer, but they can also brighten a room in your house for almost two weeks.

Commonly called "Black-Eyed Susan," this hardy (zones 4 to 9) perennial is famous for being relatively maintenance-free and long-blooming throughout the summer. Breed from wild-stock of North

American prairie heritage, these plants can tolerate heat, dry soil conditions, and occasional neglect.

They can suffer from extended periods of soggy soil, so make sure your ground is well-drained. Don't worry about fertility, for they seem to grow best (and be healthier) if not over-fertilized.

The only downside of these plants is they can be a short-lived perennial. The blossoms can produce a tremendous amount of seed, which weakens the plant and may not survive a winter. The upside is you will have new plants springing up in the spring. The best seedlings will grow, and before you know it, they will be blooming.

One of the best and extensively grown varieties available is **Goldsturm**, having brilliant yellow petals with a dark brown to black central cone — the “black-eye.” It grows to over three feet tall, is bushy, producing boat-loads of daisies for most of the summer.

Although many varieties have variations of the bright yellow and dark center flowers, new types are being bred showcasing unexpected colors. Be sure to grow **Cherry Brandy**, which has vibrant reddish or burgundy petals.

Perform your necessary cut flower procedures, as repeatedly advised to you from earlier flower descriptions. As mentioned in the first paragraph, you can expect almost two weeks of enjoyment from these flowers. They are one of the “perfect cut flowers” available for you to grow for your garden and home.

# Scabiosa – Pincushion Flower

## Scabiosa atropurpurea



**You're itching to know more about this flower, aren't you?**

This constant blooming garden annual will supply you with bucket-loads of cut flowers all summer. Not only does it flaunt colorful petals, but it also provides plenty of nectar for the neighborhood butterflies.

*Scabiosa* can also provide you with desperate small-talk material when trapped with neighbors, family members, and friends after discussions of work, sports, politics, and the weather becomes depleted. Here, you tell them this annual has blooms resembling pincushions — which prompts you to explain what a pincushion is and its function.

Afterward, you can lecture them about this plant's Latin generic name, which refers to the medical condition called scabies in which tiny mites burrow under the skin epidermis. Talk about parasites will always liven up a conversation, especially if referenced to the movie "*Alien*." You will then enlighten them that this plant does not attract such alien mites, but rubbing the leaves on the skin helps ease the constant itchiness caused by them.

If you have made it this far in talking about this plant, congratulations, for it is rare to engage in a candid one-sided discussion about botanical names and histories. I bore most people to tears about such talks, but you're a gardener, and such things interest you (and me).

Oh well, back to the subject of cut flowers. This plant is not only low-maintenance and low-care but provides you with stiff, long stems. This is great for making impressive and inexpensive bouquets (with an average vase-life of a week) from midsummer until a fall frost. What more can you ask? Well, you can also use them in dried flower arrangements.

*Scabiosa* is easy to plant in the garden from sown seed or transplants. Most selections are of mixed colors, but you can get separate colors, including the popular "almost black" flower color from online seed catalogs. Plant them in full sunlight and well-drained soil. Please don't fuss over soil fertility; for less than ideal conditions are best for plant growth and bloom.

Most growers recommend planting it with other taller growing annuals to act as supports to prevent the flowers from flopping over. Try to keep them from forming seeds (thus the reason for constant cutting for the house) to keep them blooming. By fall, allow some plants to go to seed. This helps to re-seed them for new growth in the spring.

For gardeners in warmer climates, it can re-grow as a perennial, and form larger plants by summer. More flowers for the picking!

# Tagetes – Marigold

*Tagetes patula and Tagetes erecta*



**In history, there were the Wars of the Roses. Let's not have the Wars of the Marigolds.**

Earlier in this ebook, I mentioned that Calendula's (*Calendula officinalis*) nickname is Pot Marigold. Now, this plant has the name of Marigold. Hey, what gives? Over time and generations, people misidentified plants and attached the popular name they think it is to a similar-looking plant.

If you look at both Calendula and Tagetes flowers, they have a "somewhat" familiar resemblance. Technically, the leaves and stems

look different, but who cares about them? It's all about the flowers. So, the common name of Marigold stuck for both plants.

Herbalists and gardeners-of-old named each plant in honor of the Virgin Mary. Since the native flowers (of both types) are yellow, the name eventually became Mary's Gold, and later shortened to Marigold.

The trouble is, gardeners continue to have a preference in the naming rights to honor Mary. Anyway, let's not lose sleep over this dispute and get back to describing *Tagetes* Marigolds.

These floriferous annual garden flowers are simple to sow and grow. The large-flowered varieties are **African Marigolds** (*Tagetes erecta*), while the smaller-flowered ones are the **French Marigolds** (*Tagetes patula*) even though they originated in Mexico and South America — go figure!

The African varieties (sometimes more accurately called Mexican or Aztec marigolds) can grow up to four feet and are bushy. There are plenty of long stems for cutting all summer long. The French types grow smaller and have shorter stems — still suitable for small vases.

Marigold seed is cheap, they grow quickly and bloom nonstop until a fall frost or collapse from excessive bloom exhaustion. If you wish to raise other flowering plants in your flower garden, consider having these flowers live in your vegetable garden. Let them bloom alongside your tomato plants or outline your garden to deter nematodes and hungry deer.

You can find varieties having bright yellow, orange, burnish red and off-white petals. Yes, not much of a color selection, but there are plenty of shades and flower sizes.

The larger African Marigolds (and the French varieties) will offer you plenty of easy-care cut flowers for your house. Their stems are hollow but sturdy, and you can expect them to last up to a week, maybe two.

Brace yourself for the bad news: almost all the varieties stink to high heavens, to put it mildly. The stems and leaves have a wide-eyed, nose-

twisting, high-octane, herbal scent when handled. Fortunately, you cannot smell them for cut flowers and outdoor displays — only when you handle them.

One rare African variety, called **Golden Age**, has large, orange, double flowers and is perfect for cutting. It differs from most, if not all, other Marigolds, for its stems and leaves are odorless.

All Marigolds prefer plenty of sunlight and well-drained soil. Any consistently wet ground will rot the roots and stems. They can tolerate less-than fertile soil, but giving them a light feeding over the summer would be beneficial. They can go several days without water, but if no rain is in sight, take the time to give them a quenching drink of water. Mary will bless you for doing so.

# **Tithonia – Mexican Sunflower**

## **Tithonia rotundifolia**



**“Gold Flower of the Incas” is a more impressive nickname.**

Unlike most relatives of sunflowers, this eye-catching annual plant only grows to an average of five feet tall, with large deep green leaves and vibrant, orange-red to pure yellow, daisy-like flowers. Over the summer, one plant can produce several side branches, highlighting several of these long-stemmed flowers to enjoy from summer to fall.

Native to Mexico and Central America, it is easy to grow from seed and raise in any garden as long as it grows in full sunlight and less fertile soil. It is one of the most drought tolerant tall-growing flowers you can

grow in a garden. You don't have to worry about watering it if you are away for an extended period.

Varieties called **Torch**, **Yellow Torch**, and **Sundance** are available as seed from many catalogs and garden centers. The seeds are large enough to handle and so simple to insert into the soil. This plant is perfect for children's gardens since they grow less tall, bushy, and are the favorite hangout for all the neighborhood butterflies and hummingbirds.

A room in your house will also become a popular hangout if you add a vase filled with these long-stemmed beauties.

# Verbena – Tall Verbena

## *Verbena bonariensis*



**This species is named after Buenos Aires, Brazil, where it was first discovered.**

One of my pet peeves is seeing vase displays stuffed with too many flowers. Clumped together, they look like the vase top exploded with many competing “look at me” blossoms. Count me as a minimalist in cut flower displays.

Here is one such garden plant that is simple, elegant, and beautiful when being showcased in the garden border or in a vase. Its long, sturdy stems branch out in smaller stems, which then culminate into many clusters of small pinkish-purple florets. You would think they are

not “cut flower worthy” to bother with, but appearances can be misleading.

Many cut flower growers express their approval in growing this plant for providing several cuts from midsummer until fall. Their long stems and floral clusters add an air of lightness and loftiness. If you desire the need to add other flowers with them, include ones having the same feel — such as Queen Anne’s Lace, Dara, or *Ammi majus* (Bishop’s Weed). All three are described above.

For additional garden enjoyment, the flowers attract plenty of butterflies from around the neighborhood. Alas, if only your indoor display had butterflies fluttering around them. Imagine that!

Raise this plant by seed sown in the early spring. Germination can take time, so be patient. The plants prefer to grow in sunny, well-drained, but fertile soil.

Now don’t faint on me, but mature plants can get to a height of nearly six feet but usually less. They will become bushy with all those tall branching stems. You can place these plants in the back of a border or in the center of a flower bed.

Although classified as an annual, it can be perennial if you live in zones 7 to 10 (lucky you.) In these zones, the plants can become very large and, sometimes, borderline weedy — to the point of being invasive. Being an excellent gardener, you know the drill on clipping off spent flowers to prevent re-seeding. There. Problem solved.

As for their cut flower maintenance, just follow the regular procedures described for many of the above flowers.

# Zinnia

## Zinnia elegans



**I can't get that Rodgers and Hammerstein song out of my head.**

It may be debatable, but our old and dependable annual Zinnia flowers display the longest-lasting cut flower of all those plants listed earlier. There are reports by sellers and growers of cut-flowers that certain varieties of Zinnias can last up to three weeks after the initial cut. I am a skeptical person, but that time frame seems too long.

Other authorities also appear suspicious and have the longevity of zinnias, at most, of being a week or two. Now, that seems reasonable. If your zinnias can go longer in looking fresh and enjoyable, then you are

doing something right. Change the vase water every day (or every other day) along with a new cut of the stems.

Several cut flower growers suggest one of the best varieties of Zinnias to last the longest in a vase is **Benary's Giants**. This type showcases huge five to six-inch diameter flower-heads on sturdy two to three-foot-tall stems for most of the summer.

A close runner-up for outstanding vase-life is the **Oklahoma Series**. It has slightly smaller flowers but also provides prolific outdoor-indoor displays with a wide range of bright colors. Cut-flower growers agree that *"You're doin' fine, Oklahoma, Oklahoma, you're OK."* in displaying vibrant colors and strong stems.

Many other varieties of Zinnias are excellent for cut-flower use. Make sure to grow the hybrid types since they are more disease resistant.

As an easy-to-grow annual, you can sow or sprinkle the flattened seed in a well-prepared, well-drained bed. Expose the plants to as much sunlight as possible for best blooming from early summer to fall.

# Conclusion



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**Any flower, with a stem, will look great in a vase.**

There is an enormous variety of garden flowers, shrubs, and even some trees where we can cut their blossoms for indoor displays. With careful planning (depending on the season), you can establish some now — especially with raising the annual flowers.

For this ebook, I listed annuals and perennials, which you will find easy to grow, and are readily available either as seeds or garden center plants. I intentionally left out popular cut flowers taken from spring and summer-blooming bulbs. I feel that it is an injustice to cut them and leave only green stems and leaves. I think you will receive longer-lasting enjoyment by allowing them to bloom in your garden.

Please purchase daffodils, tulips, lilies, gladiolus, and other bulb-produced flowers from your local florists. They receive select varieties from cut flower specialty growers worldwide.

Picking or cutting flowers to make bouquets has had a lengthy history. At some point, someone discovered by placing them in a container of water extended flower freshness and enjoyment. Artists depicted idealized flower displays in still-life paintings, along with the occasional obligatory bowls of fruit.

Modern times depicts cut flowers as ultra-stylistic home decorations set as impressive backdrops. Here, like in those paintings, I feel we overdo the displays to the point of mass confusion. There is too much clutter, and too many wavelengths of color to comprehend with our eyes. For me, a vase full of complimentary colorful roses or two sunflowers is more comfortable to view and enjoy.

We plant many varieties of flowers but neglect to spend more time to enjoy them, especially in a garden. Cut flowers bridge that gap in appreciating their detailed beauty. Indoors, we can admire the construction, color, fragrance, and texture of each blossom.

Ever since human hands first held a bouquet of colorful petals, flowers have always been agents for enriching our lives. There will be tranquility in your garden, your house, and, ultimately, in your heart by growing and enjoying these re-blooming flowers.

# **Thank you for reading this ebook.**

I hope you have enjoyed this ebook about re-blooming cut flowers you can grow in the garden and later enjoy in your house.

Other cut flowers, such as from spring and summer-blooming bulbs and tropical plants, are available at your local florist shop. Stop in and enjoy all the beauty!

Please visit my author website of <https://gedwinvarner.com> concerning my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

# About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, "I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs." Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "read about it, see it, grow it, and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.