



Pretty Tall Bloomers

Uplifting Garden Flowers

G. Edwin Varner

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PRETTY TALL BLOOMERS: UPLIFTING GARDEN FLOWERS

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This ebook is about taller-growing flowering plants you can add to your flower beds and borders. Many of them provide excellent color and are easy to grow from seed. You can purchase several of these plants from garden centers or online nurseries (especially for the rare types).

This guide is not the definitive listing of all height-based bedding plants. There are many other taller species and varieties of annuals, perennials, and bulbs you can include in your garden beds and borders. I selected the plants listed in this ebook to provide you with taller flowers averaging five feet or more in height.

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



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Everything old (and tall growing) is new again.

Years ago, gardeners planted beautiful flowers of all types and sizes in their gardens. They placed taller-growing flowers toward the back of a border to avoid growth conflicts with smaller plants. Towering delphiniums and foxgloves shared beds and borders with small petunias and marigolds. This pattern of planting became known as cottage gardening. Everyone would enjoy seeing abundant flowers rising from the ground to above their head from spring to fall.

You can view representations of these lovely gardens nestled near small cottages in old paintings. Even grand estates embraced three-dimensional flower gardening.

Then something happened. People's attitudes toward flower gardening changed. Flower beds became draped with a single sheet of dwarf, monochromatic flowers. Mixtures of similar plants with closely related colors and sizes also became the norm.

Years ago, I owned and operated a small plant nursery growing several perennials and annual bedding flowers. My pet-peeve with customers was their constant worry that the flowers would "grow too tall." Any plant growing above three feet caused a wide-eyed panicky-look on their face. They considered taller growing annuals and perennials unappealing, in contrast to the "nice-and-short" flowers. I eventually gave up on offering any tall perennials.

Let's explore which annual, perennial, and bulb flowers you can grow to provide an uplifting look to your garden. This publication does not include shrubs or trees, for they take longer to grow and bloom. Consider them as "a work in progress" for future development and enjoyment.

Now is the time to change your perception of flower gardening by not always looking down at flowers, but also to stare upward to them.

Don't be afraid to raise your flower gardens to new heights of attraction and pleasure. Instead of planting boring beds of ankle-to-kneecap level flower displays, it's time to cultivate and admire the following plants displaying colorful eye-level and some sky-level blossoms.

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.

Acanthus – Bear's Breeches

Acanthus spinosus; mollis



I assume Smokey shops in the “big and tall” clothing stores.

I have to clarify what the common name signifies. It is one of those head-scratching names. We associate breeches with men’s clothing. My first thought was it is a miss-spelling of “britches,” as in raggedy pants. No, breeches are almost like trousers, but the legs abruptly end just below the knee. Long stockings cover the rest of the legs.

Breeches were standard attire for men before the mid-1800s. It fell from acceptance when tailors added extra material to extend down to the ankles. Men were probably giddy over wearing their first pair of

“long pants.” Today, people still wear them in horse riding competitions and fencing, but the modernized name is britches.

Now that we have learned the brief history of men’s pre-trousers (at the beginning of a gardening ebook, for heaven’s sake), what do bears (like burley blue jean-clad Smokey Bear) have to do with them and this garden plant? Well, from here, things get more bizarre.

It all begins with the size and shape of this plant’s thistle-like leaves. The edge of the leaves has an attractive spiny or toothed serration. Greek and Roman artisans and builders loved the leaves’ artistic appearance. They went “positively gaga” over chiseling the *Acanthus* leaf pattern on any marble structure that needed some decoration. If you need more proof of this “love affair,” consider Greece’s national flower is the *Acanthus*.

Name-dropping taxonomist Linnaeus gave it the Latin name of *Acanthus sativus branca ursina*. The English translation amounts to something like “Spiny Bear Bract.” The interpretation was of the leaves on the flower stalks appearing as the curving claws of a bear.

As usual, it was not long when someone mispronounced the “branca” name as “breech.” I know — how can anyone mispronounce that word? That major goof-up name permanently stuck and eventually became associated with bears wearing breeches or britches.

All right — enough about this weird history. Let’s get back on track on describing this tall growing plant. As mentioned earlier, the leaves command most of the attention, but the flower spikes are nothing to neglect. On well-established plants, the floral spikes can reach six feet tall with several white, snapdragon-like blossoms with ominous-looking purple-black “hoods” or overhanging spiny bracts. They have a Gothic appearance, like that of an abbey of mysterious monastery monks.

Blooming occurs anytime from late spring to midsummer for about four weeks.

There are two commonly grown species of *Acanthus*. From zones 4 to 10, the hardiest is *Acanthus spinosus*, which is more adaptable to many soil conditions. It also shows more extensive leaf and floral display than its close relative, *Acanthus mollis*.

All *Acanthus* species prefer plenty of sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil to grow and bloom abundantly. Try to avoid planting in a constant wet ground, which will rot the stems and roots, especially during the winter. I advise one word of warning: most species are aggressive in growth and can spread outward from where planted initially. *Acanthus mollis* is especially prone to this habit, but *Acanthus spinosus* is more controllable.

You can grow *Acanthus* from seed, but some larger garden centers will offer pot-grown plants.

There. Now, let's all calm down about obscure stories of britches, breeches, bears, Greeks, Romans, and hoody monks — time to move along to some other tall-growing flowers. Just prepare yourself for more unusual floral facts.

Alcea – Hollyhock

Alcea rosea



How the knights won the Crusades — one sore horse at a time.

Do you have the urge to develop an old-fashioned cottage garden with an abundance of “old-time” flowers? Here is one plant you need to include.

A principal representative of the immense Mallow Family, Hollyhocks have grown in flower gardens for centuries.

Native to Asia, this plant slowly spread (via explorers and traders) to the Middle East and later to Europe. Its chief importance was for the soothing salve made from the stem juice or sap. People spread applications on skin wounds and to ease sore muscles.

During those 'holier than thou' Crusades, knights slathered this sticky salve not only on their own skin but also on their horses' sore legs. One specific troublesome anatomical area, called the hock joint, is on both hind legs. Each hock (equivalent to our ankles) is necessary for sudden galloping and jumping. The "hock plant" became famous, partially helping Christianity "win" the Holy Land.

Its name eventually turned into the "Holy hock plant." Through the corruption of the English language, the name ultimately transformed into Hollyhock. Yes, a strange but true history lesson.

The flower stalks grow tall — most to over six feet — and smaller flower gardens can comfortably accommodate these enjoyable giants. They are easy to raise from seed and command attention to become "show-off plants" to your friends and neighbors.

Hollyhock flower colors range in many shades from dark rose, wine-purple, light yellow, pale pink, red, and pure white. Those varieties having fully double petals are famous for their outstanding beauty.

One beloved classic and unusual old-timer variety with 'almost-black' single petals is *Alcea rosea 'Nigra'* – **Black Hollyhock**. When back-lit by sunlight, they are a dark maroon-purple, but look black, especially when viewed in cloudy weather or partly shady areas of a garden.

Which colorful varieties can we include in our gardens? Although classified as biennials (growing from seed for the first year and then blooming in the second year), newer varieties develop more quickly to bloom by late summer. These will not grow tall this summer, but next year they will tower above you. You cannot go wrong for outstanding

beauty and height-impressiveness by including the older flower garden types.

The whole plant is impressive with flower spikes towering to eight feet tall. The blossoms may last one or two days (as usual for the Mallow family), but new ones bloom from early to late summer. Allow a few seeds to self-sow for yearly enjoyment.

Seeds of several varieties are available in many garden centers and online seed companies. Many garden centers offer potted plants, giving you a jump-start in earlier blooming.

Anemone – Windflower

Anemone hupehensis var. *japonica*



Depending on the wind speed, they may do the *Hokey Pokey* (and shake it all about.)

On one pleasant fall day, while walking in a park, I came across these eye-catching perennials. At first, I had no clue what they were but later determined their name. I knew I had to include them in my garden.

Although native to China, the Japanese grew and bred them for hundreds of years. During this time, they created many varieties — not so much in different colors but in size, floral form, and bloom time. These flowers only display in shades of pink, pale lavender, and white, but their appearance is exquisitely perfect.

Anemones grow tall — most to nearly seven feet — and less wide, commanding wide-eyed attention. Most varieties are hardy from zones 4 to 8.

These plants prefer to grow in partly sunny or dappled-shady locations with very fertile, well-drained soil. They can tolerate full sunshine but will suffer in hot, dry soil. I suggest you plant them where they are in the shade for most of the afternoon. Always make sure the soil is moist during periods of drought.

For some strange reason, I never find them offered in garden centers or nurseries in the spring. Fall blooming plants always get a ‘bum rap’ by not being offered for spring sales in nurseries. A far better reliable method to get plants is by mail-order nurseries.

Get *Anemone x hybrida* ‘**Honorine Jobert**’ for your garden. This lovely antique or heirloom variety (1858) grows up to five feet tall with several two to three-inch, pure white blossoms with bright yellow stamens. The petals have a lovely satiny sheen, which dares you not to glance but gaze at the flowers.

You can expect blossoms for several weeks, beginning in midsummer to supply you with several long-stemmed cut-flowers.

Because of these long stems, Asian people gave this plant the nickname of “windflower.” Their imagination suggests that a slight breeze will gently sway the flowers as if they’re dancing in the air. Isn’t that a beautiful vision?

Not sure you should grow this perennial in your garden? Well, it made the 2016 Perennial Plant Association “Plant of the Year” award if that helps in your decision.

Aster – New England Aster

Aster novae-angliae; Symphyotrichum novae-angliae



Where you should find the stars — up in the sky.

Most, if not all, of our garden flowers originated as wildflowers from somewhere in the world. They became accepted into our gardens because of their beauty, usually as smaller-sized individuals or from genetically selected stock.

Once these plants became tame from their wildly growing lifestyles, they were further chosen for better qualities. Some of these qualities are disease resistance, improved flower colors, and increased hardiness and vigor.

Asters are one such group of plants which botanists and growers manipulated to fit comfortably in our gardens. Modern varieties usually display as mounded, shorter plants covered with flowers — just like their *Chrysanthemum* relations — in the fall. But those tall-growing wild-bunch can thrive and be enjoyed for their outstanding garden beauty. If you can find a sunny, well-drained, fertile spot in your garden, these taller plants will dazzle you with color.

One such behemoth of beauty is the **New England Aster**. These stately plants, native to North America, display their bright purple flower clusters with yellow centers across the rural landscapes and wild-gardens in late summer or early fall. A plant can grow over six feet and flaunt its stunning purple blossoms for about two months.

Since it blooms in Autumn, the flowers provide an important nectar source for many pollinator insects, especially migrating Monarch butterflies.

This plant can act as a weed for it self-seeds a-plenty in favorable growing conditions such as fertile, moist soil and sunny locations. It can tolerate drier soil, partial shade, and less than ideal productive habitat, such as a road bank, but may not grow as tall.

These stunning plants are hardy from zones 3 to 7 but suffer in warmer zonal locations.

We can grow this plant in our gardens if you periodically clip off the top and side growing shoots (similar in cultivating Chrysanthemums). Do this until mid-summer to create a low-growing, bushy, cushiony plant by fall. The resultant flowering will amaze you!

Older reference books list this plant as *Aster novae-angliae* (which I grew up with). Botanists now classify it as *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*. Whoa! That's a sloppy mouthful of Latin! They can't leave the names alone for us regular folk. Oh well, between you and me, let's keep it listed as *Aster*. I won't tell if you don't.

Botanists and breeders have selected and genetically crossed other *Aster* species to create several colorful garden and landscaping

varieties. For example, *Aster novi-belgii* is the **New York Aster** or **Michaelmas Daisy**. It looks similar to the New England Aster both in color and season of bloom. Many of its cultivars (or varieties) grow shorter, which is terrific for including in small gardens and containers.

These varieties are also hardy from zones 4 to 8.



One other tall-growing Aster appears to climb like a vine, but it doesn't do so. *Aster carolinianus* or *Ampelaster carolinianus* is known as the **Climbing Carolina Aster**. This late fall blooming Aster does not climb for it produces long, woody stems that weave in among shrubs, tall perennials, fences, or other supporting structures. It cannot wrap around objects like a vine, but it grows-like-mad during the summer, having help standing up by its neighbors.

Then, in the late fall, it blooms. It produces a mass of pinkish-lavender flowers highlighted by yellow stamens. The blossoms have a sweet, honey fragrance. I was skeptical at first, but I detected a tart, wild

honey scent. It's not overpowering, but is very noticeable, and surprising, coming from an Aster.

This plant is a native of the Southeastern areas of the United States. Its weakness is with frigid temperatures. Being hardy only from zones 7 to 10, the top growth will die back to the ground in lesser zones, resulting in a loss of heavy blooming later in the fall.

Like all Asters, it would love as much sunshine and fertile soil as possible.

You will have trouble finding this rare perennial in garden centers, so your best bet is to find it online.

Because of a recent naming revision of the Aster family, the Climbing Aster has a new genus name called *Ampelaster*. Don't lose sleep over this, but it can become confusing.

Brugmansia – Angels’ Trumpets

Brugmansia suaveolens



Thank heavens they don't play harps all the time.

Known affectionately as “Angel’s Trumpets,” this 10-foot-tall herbaceous tree is native to South America’s tropical regions, particularly in Brazil. Wild plants apparently no longer exist. That is alarming, but, because of their popularity with gardeners, they now survive world-wide.

Their common angelic name is for their big trumpet-like blossoms that hang down from its upper branches.

The plant is very susceptible to frost, so it is best to plant them in large containers. For colder locations, you can always move them indoors for

the winter. By late spring (after the last frost), place them outside for new growth, and they will bloom by midsummer.

Place your plants in as much sunlight as possible, for they love the heat. Raise them in well-fertilized soil so they can grow and bloom well.

Many varieties are available, having gorgeous colors of peach-orange, yellow, white, or pink-red petals. One popular type is **Charles Grimaldi** (shown above) with deep yellow to pale orange petals. The flowers look limp or wilted during the day, causing concern with new gardeners, but quickly “wake-up” by evening. (I think we all know a few people that act similarly.) They (the flowers, not the people) then release a heavy mesmerizing sweet perfume well into the night.

All parts of Brugmansia are highly toxic and fatal if eaten. Let's be content to just smell these colorful flowers!

Buddleia – Butterfly Bush

Buddleia davidii



What do a thousand miles matter when discovering new flowers?

I love stories on how popular flowering plants get their Latin and common names. For this woody perennial-shrub, botanists posthumously honored the Reverend Adam Buddle as the first person to discover the Butterfly Bush (sometime in the 1600s) while touring Chile. He found a Chilean species, but most of today's varieties are descendants from Chinese species. Horticulturists and botanists still find new species growing in China.

The former name of this shrub was "Buddlebush." The name 'did not stick,' but the word 'butterfly' did. Gardeners later observed the colorful

and highly fragrant flowers attract our large-winged insects.

Are some butterflies attracted to specific colors of Buddleia? Scientists have discovered it depends on the butterfly species — some prefer white, others pink, while others like blue.

If the color doesn't attract them, the fragrance of the flowers will. Arranged on many elongated spikes, thousands of tiny florets bloom, releasing a heavenly perfume blend of citrus, honey, and pine, but you may detect something else.

These plants appear to have no insect or disease problems; their only concern is severe cold temperatures. They are hardy from zones 5 to 10. They are classified as woody shrubs, but in northern climates, the top growth sometimes dies back to the ground during the winter like a perennial. By spring, underground shoots quickly re-grow, forming a larger bush by midsummer.

Grow them in full sun and fertile soil for best growth and blooming.

Depending on where you live, your soil fertility, and variety (or species), some Buddleias can grow nearly to ten feet tall. If you live in colder climates, most varieties will average less. However, they still command the admiration of their size and abundance of bloom.

Canna

Canna indica and many hybrids



Why should colorful flowers have all the attention?

If you desire to add a tropical feel to your flower gardens, you can't go wrong with including these colorful plants. It is not only their striking flowers but also the large leaves that offer plenty of visual enjoyment.

Many varieties flaunt excessively colorful variegated leaves, which look like stained glass windows back-lit by the sun. Some gardeners will shyly confess that it is these leaves they enjoy more than the flowers.

But let's cut the flowers some slack, for they offer plenty of "eye candy" colors. Many varieties showcase brilliant yellow, pink, red, and orange shades intermix with white stripes and splotches. Strangely, botanists

(and growers) discovered no pure white species or variety is in existence.

Cannas are native to tropical and subtropical regions of Central and South America. Over time, different species became “transplanted” into temperate and other tropical areas of the world. These plants become popular, not only for their ease of culture but also for their adaptability to form hybrids and grow in any garden.

Grown from thick rhizomes, their ultimate height — based on how tall the flower stalk grows — can extend up to eight feet or more, depending on the variety.

All Cannas prefer to grow in full to partial sunlight and continuously moist, highly fertile soil — either in the garden or in containers. These plants thrive in humid conditions but will need regular watering during times of drought.

Cold region gardeners (below zone 8) have splendid success growing these plants by planting the rhizomes in larger containers and setting them outside after the last frost. By fall, bring these pots indoors for the winter. By withholding water during this time, you simulate natural dormancy for the rhizomes.

The critical question is, which tall-growing Canna can you plant? Each year, new types are all created with many growing to “acceptably comfortable” heights. If you wish to grow a couple giants, consider growing ‘**Pretoria**’ also called ‘**Bengal Tiger**’ (shown above.) It has stunning orange flowers with yellow-striped (or is it green-striped?) foliage. It can grow to 8 feet tall or more.



'Tropicanna' (shown above) has unique multi-colored variegated leaves highlighted with large, orange flowers. It can exceed 8 feet tall when fully established.

One significant benefit to growing these plants is not only to attract everyone's eyes but also to attract pollinators such as butterflies and hummingbirds.

Ceratotheca – South African Foxglove

Ceratotheca triloba



Pet rocks were also a fad.

Not related to the biennial foxglove (*Digitalis*) listed later, this curious fuzzy annual plant has similar-shaped blossoms, only more substantial,

but not as colorful. The petals are pure white or a delightful, creamy lavender with violet stripes within the elongated throat.

Related to Snapdragons (*Antirrhinum*), it is native to South Africa and hardy from zones 9 to 10. This plant can grow to over six feet in a fertile flower bed but is usually much less tall. It makes an excellent show in a large container and is of a controllable height.

Plant it in full to partial sunlight, fertile, and well-drained soil to achieve maximum blooming throughout the summer. It will bloom into the fall if you periodically trim off the developing seed pod stems. It is also drought-tolerant, so you need not worry about watering it if you are away for a prolonged time.

Imported as seeds into the United States in 1805, the plant never became well known to American gardeners for some unexplained reason. In Victorian England, it became the rage in British gardening society and later on... forgotten. Growing it must have been a 'fad.' After becoming bored with it, gardeners became obsessed with raising other unusual flowers. All gardeners have a psychological condition similar to 'shiny object syndrome.' It is called 'pretty flower syndrome.' We always gravitate to the newest beautiful flowers to grow and enjoy.

You cannot find these plants in garden centers, but larger seed companies will have it available. Don't worry, for this plant is easy to grow from seed and raise to enjoy those eye-catching, beautiful flowers.

Clematis

Clematis hybrida varieties



To get ahead in life, you will need the support of others.

For enjoying flowers having height, you always need to grow plants classified as vines. I will not detail all those available here (for I have written an ebook describing many of them, and the title is referenced later.) In this review, I selected one crucial group that will always please you with excessive, colorful bloom.

In deciding what beautiful garden vines to grow, many people will always choose these stunning climbers. Train these vines on trellises, pergola posts, fences, and, for a more naturalistic approach, on other

shrubs such as roses. They are floriferous and beautiful from spring to fall, depending on the species and varieties.

Although they grow well and bloom while basking in sunlight, you can plant these vines in partially shaded areas such as under lattice, a pergola, or a porch overhang. They may not be as floriferous as full-sun grown plants, but the blossoms seem to compensate by becoming more substantial in size.

The best display involves planting varieties with pure white, light pink, purple, or powder-blue flowers. Even the small-flowered, fragrant **Autumn Clematis** (*Clematis paniculata*), which blooms in late summer, can achieve similar outstanding results.

Go to your favorite nursery or garden center in spring to view many colorful varieties. Several more, including rare types, are available from online and mail-order nurseries.

Please order from specialist nurseries instead of generalized growers. Specialist nurseries take better care of their plants, are true-to-name, and ship them without stem bending or breakage.

Try not to damage the stems, such as bending them or damaging the thin bark, while planting. This breakage will only cause the vines to experience a significant developmental setback.

Clematis is not a quick grower, for it may take two years or more to become established and bloom.

Evergreen varieties need to grow in warmer zone locations. Prune these vines after they bloom so they can form flowers on last year's wood. Several species are slow to wake up in the spring after their winter slumber. This lethargy can cause concern for new gardeners thinking the vines are dead. Allow them enough time to awaken.

Colocasia – Elephant Ears

Colocasia esculenta



This is the closest thing to actually standing next to an elephant.

Prepare yourself for being amazed, awed, and slightly overwhelmed when you first encounter this plant.

When at a garden center, I had mixed feelings when I first met it. Thrilled, I was also a little intimidated by its enormous height and the massive leaves and flowers. I felt like that of Lemuel Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. It was when he encountered the land and giant people of Brobdingnag. This plant is amazing!

Growers nickname it "Elephant Ears" or "Taro." The leaves have a coarse texture with prominent veins, but some have exciting leaf colors.

Some varieties have the usual green, but many have bronze, and even pure black (dark-purple) leaves.

There are clusters of large, white arum-like flowers. Just like the leaves, they are also larger than usual. The flower has a modified leaf called a spathe, and the stamens or pistils are on the central yellow spadix. There is a slightly foul odor associated with these types of flowers that attract pollinating flies.

Easy to grow from bulbs, we can plant Elephant Ears in the garden (remember, it needs plenty of space) or enormous pots — like halved whiskey barrels.

It prefers fertile, well-drained soil, plenty of water, fertilizer, and full sunlight to partial shade to get the maximum growing size. The bulbs are hardy from zones 8 to 11, but a freeze will kill the outermost leaves. Northern growers will need to bring the potted bulbs indoors or in a heated garage for the winter.

You can find these bulbs in many larger garden centers or online bulb specialty nurseries.

Coreopsis – Giant Tickseed

Coreopsis tripteris



This tall flower grows near the little house on the prairie.

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

Sometimes, a family of flowering plants gets shoved out of popularity. Once widespread, some flowers can become mediocre and later become forgotten. These colorful and long-blooming plants once graced flower beds and borders. They are now eclipsed by the rise of our ordinary, shorter growing bedding plants. Maybe it was because most

Coreopsis species are tall-growing since their heritage is of being prairie plants.

By some accounts, there are over 80 species of Coreopsis. About half are native to the prairie areas of the entire central length of North America. The other half are native to regions in Central and South America. With these species, breeders have been very busy creating colorful hybrids.

You can purchase potted plants of these various hybrids in garden centers, and seeds (including several species) in wildflower catalogs. Some varieties in garden centers have stunning red, pink, orange, and vibrant yellow petals with additional bi-colors, bizarre stripes, and splotches.

We now treat these colorful annual and perennial plants as valuable and attractive flowers to grace any garden, including one devoted to height.

Most types bloom all summer if planted in full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil.

Being a vibrant-colored member of the daisy family, it gets its unusual nickname of tickseed for having its seeds resembling blood-engorged ticks. Oh, that's sick! The things people imagine are borderline disturbing. Let's concentrate on those stunning flowers instead of reaching for a can of bug spray.

Cosmos

Cosmos bipinnatus



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A few inches shy of touching the stars.

As a relative in the immense daisy family, cut flower growers say Cosmos is “ridiculously easy” to sow n’ grow in any garden. These plants will reward you with a windfall of stunning ever-blooming flowers.

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

The blossoms usually have long stems held high above the attractive fern or feather-like foliage. Most plants can grow to four feet tall — with some varieties in excellent growing conditions can scale over six or seven feet. They are also bushy and can 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 fall.

You can expect a wide range of colors (except true-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 up to, or exceeding, five feet tall.

If you prefer semi and fully double flowers, the variety called **Double Click Mix** has an assortment of bright colors.

Most Cosmos flowers also make excellent cut flowers. Most varieties last in the vase for nearly a week or two with regular water changes.

Crinum – Giant Spider Lily

Crinum x amabile; Crinum asiaticum



This is not an itsy-bitsy spider!

Although the name says lily, this bulb is related to the Amaryllis and Hippeastrum (the large, popular bulbs sold at Christmas.) The spider name is for the long, pink to red petals and stamens that extend several inches away from the flower stalk.

Another stunning feature is the leaves have a dark green to purple coloration. In a shady location, the leaves arch over and look like a giant spider figure. Yes, it appears so exotic but, being a tropical plant, it should be!

This bulb and its relations are native to tropical areas of Asia. It is hardy from zones 9 to 11, but one of those rare winter freeze-ups will kill the top growth. Most gardeners should plant this bulb into large pots or containers and then store indoors over the winter.

It is a favorite landscape plant in warm, frost-free locations. The flower stalk (called an inflorescence) of most *Crinum* species can tower to over five feet when the plant is older. When growing in ideal conditions — especially in a tropical setting — the stalk can extend to almost ten feet tall. Wowzer! You will need a stepladder to smell the flowers.

These plants love to grow in partial shade, fertile, well-drained soil, and blooms each summer evening with a sweet lily-like fragrance. It may be a challenge to find these bulbs in garden centers.

Delphinium - Larkspur

Delphinium elatum



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***“..And we know Flipper, lives in a world full of wonder,
Flying there-under, under the sea!”***

1964-1967 NBC TV show "*Flipper*". Melody and lyrics by H. Vars and B. Dunham

This popular perennial is a favorite occupant in any flower garden. You can easily recognize them in photos or drawings of old-fashioned cottage gardens with their towering flower spikes. Dark blue or purple flowering varieties are the most popular, but there are also pleasant lighter shades of sky blue, pink, and pure white types available for home gardeners.

Historically, Delphinium gets its name from "delphis" — a Greek word meaning dolphin. The shape of the flower resembles (*somehow*) a Bottlenose Dolphin. Okay... if that's what people imagine it to be. This must be the gardening version of a Rorschach Test.

Their other common nickname is larkspur in some areas of the world. It can cause confusion, especially when referring to the annual species.

As a popular hardy plant (zones 3 to 8) for gardens, you may think they are easy to grow. Well, that is not always the case. It can be a challenge to raise them from seed and grow to "adulthood."

One challenge with many gardeners, when sowing the seeds, is providing them with a cold, moist period. Many perennials need a similar experience for seed germination and flower formation for spring and summer development. Mature plants need cold wintery conditions to break dormancy in the spring and then grow.

These plants prefer cooler summer areas, regularly moist and fertile soil, and less windy locations. These requirements rule out several regions of the world. But, take heart, for new hybrid varieties, bred over the years, help adapt (to some extent) to less favorable conditions. These more modern types have sturdy stems to support the excessive floral enhanced spikes. If your garden is exposed to occasionally strong winds, it would be wise to stake the stems.

Suppose you don't want to see those unsightly stakes. You can also incorporate other tall-growing plants, like those listed in this ebook, to help support your delphiniums (and each other).

These plants prefer to grow in plenty of sunlight, but the soil will also dry more quickly. Make sure you add plenty of humus to incorporate into the soil to help retain moisture. If you live in excessively humid or dry climates, most Delphiniums will suffer and perish.

Most species are native to the higher elevations of mountainous areas of northern latitudes of Europe, Asia, and extending into North America. They can also be native to mountainous regions of Africa. That's an enormous chunk of real estate to become entrenched in.

So, what large varieties can you sow or plant? Growers suggest the **Elatum Hybrid Strain** is currently the tallest — their floral spikes towering above six feet. This hybrid provides your usual base colors, many having semi-double petals, with contrasting white, black, or brown centers (commonly called “bees”). Another varietal group is the **Pacific Hybrid Strain**, which grows “slightly” less tall (what's a few inches among admirers?) with similar flower colors.

Most Delphiniums can bloom all summer, but only if you cut off the central spikes and allow side branching spikes to grow. They may not grow as tall, but still provide a spectacular show of color.

Digitalis – Foxglove

Digitalis purpurea varieties



Fashionable foxes dress formally for a night of hunting.

When developing a vertically enhanced garden, I believe this hardy biennial or perennial (and its near relations) is probably the most beautiful garden flower. I know there are plenty of opposing viewpoints on other contenders, but the *Digitalis* tubular or funnel-shaped flowers dangling from their tall stalks look stunning.

It is not only their petal base-color, but the excessive spotting of contrasting colors within the blossoms (technically called nectar guides) gives them a technicolor brilliance unsurpassed by many other flowers.

It is positively mesmerizing to stare into blossoms and “get lost” amongst these vivid colors and speckled patterns.

Most *Digitalis purpurea* varieties can grow over six feet tall, but this depends on providing the best-growing conditions. They include being raised in a partly shady, well-drained, but moist, fertile soil. Probably the best variety to achieve this towering achievement is growing the **Excelsior Group**. This type provides plenty of pink, lavender, and white-based flowers, all having neon contrasting nectar guide spots. This variety is “the tops” in *Digitalis* enjoyment!

Although hardy from zones 4 to 8, and classified as a biennial, the *purpurea* species can be perennial if you snip the spent flower stalks off to prevent excessive seed formation. Producing many flowers and resultant seed pods by fall weakens each plant, which may not survive the winter. You will also have the chore of weeding-out unwanted seedlings in the spring. I guess beauty comes with a price of additional labor.

As with all species of *Digitalis*, these plants are very poisonous if eaten. All parts of the plant contain a chemical called digitalin. Cardiologists commonly use this compound to treat heart conditions, especially in controlling congestive heart failure. Isn't it amazing that something so beautiful and deadly can also save lives?

One particular nagging question arises: what does the common name of “foxglove” mean? Ages ago, a myth originated in the rural English countryside where *Digitalis* grew abundantly in and around shady woodlands. Foxes would dig their dens underneath the evergreen leaves of extensive blooming areas of *Digitalis*. Before going on the hunt for prey, they would slip the tubular flowers onto their paws (as gloves) to silence their movement. Well, at least they were stylish while hunting.

Eupatorium – Joe Pye Weed

Eutrochium purpureum



It may lower a fever but will raise your spirits.

Those of you willing to raise tall-growing plants in your garden, this hardy zone 4 perennial, is ideal. Native from central to eastern areas of North America, it can grow up to and exceed eight feet tall. Blooming from mid to late summer, we can find this plant growing in moist ground — either in depressed meadows, the edge of forests, and in roadside ditches.

We should grow this plant in any garden to impress all eyes (and noses) with their tall, sturdy stems, impressively whorled leaves, and breathtaking, vanilla-scented dome-shaped, pale-pink to rose-pink

flower heads. Long descriptive words (and that equally long sentence) can't convey the magnificence of this plant!

So, how did the Joe-Pye name originate? Rumor has it an old native Indian medicine man, known by colonial New England settlers as Joe Pye, used extracts of this plant to help cure several diseases, particularly typhoid fever. The Indian word for typhoid was "jopi," and because of errors of pronunciation (and spelling) became "joe-pie" or "joe-pye." Anyway, people named this fantastic plant in his honor.

Don't let the size of this plant intimidate you into not adding it in your garden. If you can allow enough space, it will reward you with the impressive result of gorgeous flowers.

Filipendula – Queen-of-the-Prairie

Filipendula ulmaria; *rubra*



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There is a reason they call a queen “her highness”.

This magnificent prairie wildflower grows to over five feet tall. It produces fern-like deep green leaves with fluffy or foamy creamy white to pink flower spikes. Each flower is tiny, but each spike contains hundreds of them. They release a sweet, musk, or earthy scent that changes from light to powerful depending on the time of day or the weather. I guess you will need to camp outside in your garden for a few days to determine when that happens.

This perennial was a vital cottage garden plant years ago. Before gardeners became terrified of tall-growing plants and retreated to growing only dwarf bedding flowers, it made an excellent background plant. The fluffy inflorescences convey lightness and airiness. You will experience heaven-on-earth when you inhale the sweet but subdued perfume.

Meadowsweet grows best in partial shade and in fertile soil. It is hardy from zones 3 to 9, so every gardener has no reason not to enjoy its magnificence.

You may have trouble finding it in garden centers, but online wildflower specialty nurseries should have potted or bare-root plants.

Hedychium – Ginger Lily

*Hedychium gardnerianum; flavum; coccineum
and many hybrids*



A quick trip to the tropics can be as easy as stepping into your garden.

We know these native Asian tropical plants as Butterfly Ginger Lilies or Garland Lilies. First, let's make something clear — this group of plants is not the ginger-spice source for cooking. That is another type of plant (*Zingiber officinale*).

Ginger Lilies will grow two types of stems; the first is a thick, fleshy rhizome that develops at or below the soil surface. The second stem is the main leafy shoot that emerges from the rhizome and produces the

fragrant, showy flowers above a shaft of huge, canna-like, dark-green leaves. These blossoms flaunt all colorful shades of white, yellow, red, and orange.

They prefer warm, partly shaded areas with very moist, fertile soil. If you have a partly shady corner in your garden, this will be a great place to grow it. You will instantly have an instant 'illusion' of being in the tropics. The plants can grow to a height of six feet or more in ideal settings.

Their exotic blossoms release a beautiful perfume — something like gardenia and honeysuckle — from midsummer to frost. You can grow it outdoors in a bed or border, but I recommend planting it in a large container if you live in colder zones. When it blooms, you can move it to where you spend your days and evenings.

Several species are available to gardeners, and many larger garden centers should have them available. Try to locate the variety called **Vanilla Ice** — unique with eye-catching variegated leaves. Beginning in midsummer, it blooms with gorgeous peach or light orange flowers with a darker orange throat, all perfumed with Easter lily and honeysuckle! It is a very vigorous grower.

Gingers are hardy from zones 8 to 11, but it is an annual for colder areas. Propagate them by separation of the rhizome joints and store in slightly moist peat moss for the winter. Replant them outside after the last spring frost.

Helianthus – Sunflower

Helianthus annuus; maximiliani



Star light, star bright, Genghis Khan would admire their height.

Our favorite star is 93 million miles above our head — give or take a few feet. Here, on our favorite planet, *Helianthus* attempts to stretch to

a tiny fraction of that distance. It shares one stellar quality — the ability to mimic the sun’s brilliance, but to a much lesser extent.

For such a large flower-head to grow tall, it needs to have a long, thick stem or stalk. The stalk is so sturdy and fibrous that, by late fall, even an ax can have trouble cutting through it by.

You can purchase seeds from any seed catalog or garden center. For a tall variety — over 10 feet — grow the impressive **Mongolian Giant**. This plant will make a powerful impression on anyone with its height and the size of its seeds. The whole plant is enormous!

Many other sunflower varieties will grow less lofty and still provide an admirable height.

Over recent years, interest in wildly colorful sunflowers has gained a “cult following.” These unusual varieties now share our gardens with the typical bright yellow mega-flowers. There has been an enormous leap in creating many earth-shades — from white, orange, red, garnet-red to an almost black. I can’t describe all the variations of colors on a single flower-head also created!

By advances in genetics, new pollen-less types have also emerged on the gardening scene. Growers develop them to tap into the cut-flower market. Regular sunflowers drop pollen onto tables. Sort of messy, but I feel sorry for the bees searching for nectar and pollen while visiting the large flower-heads.

If you think of sunflowers as being only those common tall, large-headed types (*Helianthus annuus*), you are mistaken. One species, *Helianthus maximiliani*, native to North America, is commonly called the **Maximilian Sunflower**. It can tower above ten feet and produce hundreds of “sunflower-daisies.”

Well, what more can I write about these easy to grow old-time favorites for children and adults? If you have never raised these giants, you should.

Seeds of several varieties — tall and short — are available in many seed catalogs, and to a lesser extent, in garden centers.

Hemerocallis – Daylily

Hemerocallis altissima and hybrids



An ancient Chinese belief states that a woman who wore daylily flowers tied to her belt while pregnant will give birth to a boy.

There are billions (not really, but close to it — someday) of Hemerocallis varieties grown worldwide. Asian people cultivated most species and varieties for centuries, mainly for use as medicinal plants. You name the ailment, and a daylily blossom or two will fix you up real fast. But they also appreciated these beautiful flowers in their gardens.

Many colorful varieties are now available for you to grow in your garden. It's impossible to choose the rarest or most fascinating types.

All daylilies grow best in full sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil and are hardy from zones 3 to 10.

Hemerocallis, in Greek translation, means “day beauty” for each flower lasts only one day, but the overall plant bloom-time can last several weeks. Some species produced fragrant flowers such as the **Old-Fashioned Lemon Daylily** (*Hemerocallis flava*). Although not a giant, it can grow to eye and nose level. This species has four-inch blossoms of bright yellow. It blooms early in the season for daylilies — middle of May and continues until the end of June. This species was one of the first daylilies introduced into gardens. Although the flowers bloom in the late afternoon, they release the heavenly perfume in the early evening air and well into the night.

Most other species and varieties found in nurseries and online will have their inflorescences (flower stalks) rise (on average) to less than five feet tall. There are a few types that exceed this height, and tower above your head. One rare species/variety is **Autumn Minaret**. This hybrid species of *Hemerocallis altissima* blooms in the late summer. Its fragrant blossoms are orangish-yellow with a rusty central “eye.” You will look toward the sky to view its galaxy of flowers, but your nose will be out of reach unless you use a stepladder. These blossoms are impressive!

Another candidate for being a giant is **Steeple Jackie**. This 6 foot-plus hybrid also blooms in late summer to early fall. It makes up for this delay by cranking-up flower production to-the-max. You can witness an abundance of small, but bright, canary-yellow blossoms clustered on its many stalks. Some growers report they keep blooming abundantly until a killing frost.

Insert these plants in the back of a border or in the center of a flower bed to not block viewing the shorter growing flowering plants.

These two varieties are rare to find. Maybe it is their tallness and being late bloomers is their fault of not being famous. I have never encountered them in garden centers.

Some online nurseries specializing in hard-to-find Daylilies and rare perennials will definitely have them available. Expect to pay a premium price for them, but they are worth it for their grandeur in any garden — especially yours!

Hibiscus

Hibiscus moscheutos



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Some varieties have the largest flowers (in diameter) than any other garden perennial.

Every flowering plant family has a few exotic members that flaunt their size, color, and bloom. This group of plants is of no exception. Being part of the extensive Mallow family, they are tall-growing perennials or woody, tropical shrubs.

For our purpose, we will concentrate on the hardy perennials. Do not confuse the colorful tropical and semi-tropical hibiscus shrubs (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) offered in many garden centers with the

following variety. Those tropical plants are sensitive to cold temperatures and need storing indoors over the winter.

As usual, with all *Hibiscus* species, their flowers will only last one or two days (like Daylilies). You may not notice this for many bloom each day. The petals unfurl in their full glory during the day, but by evening fold up and later drop off.

All varieties prefer to grow in full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. With all those flowers and foliage, please water this plant during extended dry spells.

I recommend *Hibiscus moscheutos* '**Lord Baltimore**' as one towering variety to grow in your garden. If you have the garden space and need something to show-off to your friends, this variety is a must-grow-now plant.

Created by the hybridization of several related species in 1955, this hardy (zones 4 to 9) perennial remains one of the best cultivars to grow in any garden. It rises to eight feet tall (possibly more) and four feet wide on well-established plants. For smaller growing plants, I suggest plopping them into large containers.

The bright, crimson-red, dinner-plate-sized (up to 12 inches in diameter) flowers will cover this 'herbaceous shrub' all summer. Estimates of 300 large flowers may appear on a well-grown plant throughout a typical summer. Someone sure had plenty of time to spare counting them!

With all these flowers, you may think there will be plenty of seeds produced by fall. In some varieties, yes, but for this outstanding plant, the flowers are sterile and have no seeds.

Since you are enthusiastic (as I am) to get this plant, where do we purchase it? Your local garden center may have it available but offered only as potted plants (since it produces no seeds.) If not, several well-known mail order companies always have a supply on-hand.

Lilium – Lily

Lilium auratum and Lilium speciosum hybrids



Impressive is the only adjective you need to describe these towering bulbs.

No garden is complete without the beauty, grace, and wonder of a lily. There is a vast world of species and hybrids rich in color and fragrance. Most can grow “fairly tall,” but some will tower above our heads when grown in optimal conditions.

Growers classify one such group as **Oriental Lilies**, which will grow over five feet tall — many up to eight feet or more! They bloom by midsummer and continue flaunting their stunning petals by fall. Like most garden lilies, they prefer to grow in full to part sun and fertile,

well-drained soil. If the garden experiences windy conditions, tie the stems to a support pole to prevent breakage. It's worth the trouble to perform this action.

There are many varieties of Oriental Lilies available, and they are all gorgeous. Most, if not all, have huge, scented flowers, especially the type called **Conca de' Or**, should be raised in every garden.

The first time I saw this lily, it was over my head. I had to look up, and there were all those gorgeous eight to nine inches in diameter blossoms looking down at me. One added benefit to having lilies at this level is the fragrance is closer to your nose, without having to stoop over. This lily has enormous — and I mean massive — blossoms! They are white with an interior of bright lemon yellow. The stamens have a brick-red color.

Growers classify this lily as an Oriental/Trumpet hybrid (called **Orienpet Lilies**). They can reach as tall as eight feet after growing for at least three years. It is hardy from zones 4 to 9.

One other lily, not commonly grown (or photographed), is *Cardiocrinum giganteum*, usually called "**The Giant Himalayan Lily**." Its large bulb thrives in partly shady, fertile, moist, woodsy, well-drained soil. You may think, like most lily bulbs, it is exceptionally hardy, but it isn't. The best it can muster is to survive in zones 7 to 9.

This lily is native to the Himalayas' temperate areas and extends to northern India, China, and surrounding areas. Strangely, the bulbs lie just under the surface of the soil, with their growth tips almost exposed. Gardeners in colder regions will need to dig up the bulbs and store them in frost-proof locations until spring. The problem is, by doing so, can seriously damage the bulbs.

Each plant develops many side-bulblets (also called offsets), which is critical for this lily's survival. Once the central bulb flowers (and I do mean flowers — which I will explain later), it wears itself out by the act of flowering and siring boat-loads of seeds. Then the bulb dies, the other bulblets take over and grow. Unfortunately, they take almost five

years — under the best growing conditions — to become blooming-size. If grown from seed, it can take nearly ten years to bloom. This lily is spectacular to see when blooming but can strain your patience if you grow it.

The nine-foot-tall stems (called an inflorescence or a raceme) erupts from a rosette of broad green leaves. It then produces several huge trumpet-shaped, white with a brick red or purple center, highly scented, lily-like flowers. Blooming occurs during the summer. By fall, seed pods contain millions of flattened paper-like seeds.

This is one of those garden plants you can brag about to your friends, neighbors (as if they care), and fellow garden club members (who will be envious of you).

Nicotiana sylvestris – Flowering Tobacco

Nicotiana sylvestris



The floral fragrance smells better than second-hand smoke.

When first introduced to Europe from the New World, people considered tobacco plants a foul-smelling health hazard. Future generations never learned — or cared. However, what got many people's attention was the few species that provided fragrant flowers. This species, native to Argentina, is the towering chandelier-like type that always draws in curious non-gardeners. It grows tall with clusters of pure white, tubular flowers that hang or dangle downward. Victorian gardeners planted this annual near walkways to take advantage of this addictive evening fragrance emitted from all those flowers.

The sweet perfume can spread for yards and yards (as in your yard and your neighbor's yard.) One excellent variety grown today is **Only the Lonely** (*Nicotiana sylvestris*). I guess someone was listening to the Ray Orbison song when trying to come up with a name. Grow these plants from seed, and place the seedlings in as much sunlight as possible. Make sure the soil is well-drained.

Avoid adding too much fertilizer if you want more flowers than the large leaves — unless you are the neighborhood tobacco farmer. In fact, botanists credit this species as being one parental species of commercial tobacco plant varieties. Well, let's not hold a grudge against it and just enjoy its pleasant sweet fragrance.

This species and others grow quickly from seed sown in the spring. You can purchase packets in many seed catalogs or in garden centers.

Oenothera – Tall Yellow Evening Primrose

Oenothera biennis; longissima



Skulking around a garden at night with a flashlight. What can possibly go wrong?

Most flowers listed in this ebook bloom during the day. This plant is on the night shift of bloomers. It prefers to open its petals from dusk until early morning. You can enjoy the sight of these flowers with the help of a flashlight (or torch) while perusing your garden. Your neighbors may become startled (if not panicky), but they and the subsequent arrival of police officers will eventually understand that we gardeners are peculiar people.

Evening Primroses are not related to the true springtime flowering Primroses. Why named for them is anyone's guess, for the blossoms don't look like primroses. No matter, it's another example of amateur botanical misidentification.

This biennial plant is native throughout North America. It has an affinity to grow in disturbed ground — such as abandoned fields, roadsides, drainage ditches, vacant lots, and other less than ideal locations. In fertile garden soil, it will grow and bloom exceptionally well.

These plants produce many bright yellow, four-petal scented flowers on six-foot-tall-plus branching stalks from early to late summer. Each blossom lasts one night, but more follows each succeeding evening. Although not a contender in “best in show” of garden plants, a stalk of spent flowers loses its attractive appeal. Still, the individual blossoms are lovely.

Garden centers may not offer potted plants, but seeds are available in wildflower catalogs. As stated earlier, *Oenothera* is considered a biennial and will flower the following year. Stagger sowing seeds for a couple years, so some mature plants will bloom each year. Most species are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Rosa – Landscape and Climbing Roses

Rosa species and hybrids



All is well as long as the thorns are high above our fingertips.

When discussing flowering plants in any garden setting, people always mention roses - whether or not we want them acknowledged. Unlike our annual and perennial flowering plants, roses, being woody plants, take a long time growing tall.

There are two types of taller growing roses: landscape or shrub and climbing species and varieties. Landscape roses, over time, produce long, arching canes. Eventually, the size of these canes can extend over your head. Climbing roses grow similarly but will have sturdier canes

or have support from neighboring plants or supporting structures to rise upward.

There is an enormous number of outstanding shrub and climbing roses available, including some old or heirloom roses (described in another ebook of mine entitled ***Your Antique Rose Garden***). I can't even try to list them here. My best advice is to visit your favorite garden nurseries, find ones best suited for growing in your area, and have a tall stature. Also, try to concentrate on choosing the most fragrant varieties.

Most landscape roses bloom in late spring or early summer for a few weeks, and that's it — no more flowers. Modern roses will bloom all summer but can't compare to the fantastic show of the old ones in full bloom.

Old roses command little interest or demand nowadays. You could search nurseries far and wide and not find one of these plants. There are specialty nurseries (mail order) that offer some of these shrubs. Please remember, they can be expensive, but so do other beautiful antiques.

Silphium – Compass Plant or Rosinweed

Silphium laciniatum



Now you don't need GPS access for navigating your garden.

This impressive perennial is native to the vast prairie land of North America. The coarse-textured, six to nine-foot-tall stems and bright yellow, daisy-like flowers resemble sunflowers but not related directly to them.

The common name refers to how they orient their lowermost leaves. They position themselves vertically to a north-south axis alignment. By seeing their arrangement, the pioneers could get their approximate navigational bearings.

Why on earth does it do this? Botanists theorize that it orients its leaves to avoid constant exposure to the harsh prairie sunlight during the afternoon. Aligning to a north-south position prevents excessive water loss from the leaves by showing less surface area to direct sunlight.

The other common name of rosinweed refers to the Plains Indians splitting the stalks and extracting its sticky sap (called resin). When the resin began to dry, they would start chewing it like bubblegum.

This plant is hardy from zones 3 to 8 and enjoys as much sunlight as possible. You do not have to worry about regular watering because it tolerates drier soil. Just make sure the soil is well-drained, for constant wet soil will kill the root system. If growing in ideal conditions, it can (possibly) live longer than you — hopefully for a very long time!

Blooming occurs during the summer, and each plant can produce masses of flowers. Place these giant plants in the rear of your border so as not to shade or overtake your other flowers.

On a sad note, this plant once grew in abundance with the tall prairie grasses before the plow appeared. Today, conservationists try desperately to protect some wild prairie areas.

The great American conservationist, environmentalist, and author, Aldo Leopold wrote in his book, ***A Sand County Almanac***, about the loss of the prairie fauna and flora. One passage describes him finding a solitary Compass Plant growing in an old, tall grass-covered cemetery. For him, it was ironic that one of the last few remaining wild-stock plants grew in such small protected areas, even there in a neglected cemetery. He wrote, in part:

“What a thousand acres of Silphiums looked like when they tickled the bellies of the buffalo is a question never again to be answered, and perhaps not even asked.”

You will not find this plant offered for sale in any garden center. You may discover plants in wildflower nurseries or in wildflower seed catalogs. Let’s cross our fingers that we can find and grow this fantastic plant in our flower gardens.

Solidago – Canadian Goldenrod

Solidago altissima and other species



There is no need to say “gesundheit” when growing this plant.

There are some annoying, unattractive weeds growing out and about, covering old farm fields and meadows. Some species can become troublesome and invasive. Then there are some beautiful “weeds” you do not think of as being weeds. Goldenrods are splendid examples. You will forget about weed-phobia when admiring their tall, bright yellow flower clusters for several weeks from mid to late summer.

Long popular in Europe as valued garden plants, the opposite is true for gardeners in North America. One primary reason is Goldenrod is not just one or two species, but nearly 140 species and varieties. It’s

difficult to get excited about these flowers when blooming simultaneously with hay-fever causing Ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*).

People have misunderstood in believing Goldenrod causes the hay-fever allergy. Its flowers have sticky pollen and produce nectar to attract pollinating insects. Ragweed has dust-like pollen, and it is common to see clouds of it floating in the air and being carried by the prevailing wind to allergy sufferers miles away.

As more American gardeners know that Goldenrod does not contribute to hay-fever, they are more receptive to add this attractive perennial to their gardens. Suppose you do not prefer the stately seven-foot-tall-plus species. There are now new dwarf varieties or hybrids available you can plant for late summer enjoyment.

All plants — tall and short — are hardy from zones 3 to 9 and prefer to grow in full sun and moist, fertile soil.

You can purchase seeds from wildflower seed companies. Larger garden centers and nurseries may offer dwarf hybrid varieties.

Tithonia – Mexican Sunflower

Tithonia rotundifolia



Inca gold does not always imply the valuable metal.

Tithonia is native to Mexico and also grows wild in Central America. It also has a more regal nickname of “Gold Flower of the Incas.”

This eye-catching bushy annual plant only grows to an average of five feet tall, but I have seen several well-grown plants extend even higher. No matter how tall they get, there will be plenty of vibrant, orange-red to pure yellow daisy-like flowers to enjoy from midsummer to fall.

Being a relative of the sunflower, it loves to grow in full sunlight and tolerates less fertile, drier 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 well-drained soil.

This is a perfect plant for children's gardens since it grows less tall, is bushy, and is the favorite hangout for all the neighborhood butterflies and hummingbirds.

You and your children or grandchildren should sit in lawn chairs and watch the birds and butterflies flutter all around this plant. This would be an enjoyable way to spend a delightful summer day!

Verbascum – Common Mullein

Verbascum thapsus



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Think of it as a floral skyscraper.

First things first — let's get the common name pronounced correctly. The "lein" part helps to misguide many people. The accurate way is to say, "mull-lin." Pronouncing Latin and common names of plants is always a tongue-twisting experience.

This species of Mullein is a European weed, a member of the Snapdragon family, that you usually see growing along roadsides or disturbed waste-ground areas. It is a biennial, forming a rosette of greenish-gray, velvety leaves.

The following summer forms a six to ten-foot-tall (or more!) flower spike (also covered with whitish fuzz). Masses of small, bright yellow blossoms cover this spike all summer. Then, by late fall, the plant dies. It wears itself out by nourishing all those developing flowers and seeds.

The strange thing about this plant is the flower spike may be the least attractive feature. Yes, it's impressive for its height, but the flowers are not all that exciting. They draw your eyes downward to those whitish furry flattened leaves.

Common Mullein grows throughout many areas of the Northern Hemisphere but is not a nuisance weed. Can you grow it in your garden? By all means, yes, for it can make a stunning vertical attraction to any flower garden. Just be sure to cut off the flower stalks before the seeds ripen.

Verbena – Tall Verbena

Verbena bonariensis



If only your indoor cut flowers had butterflies fluttering around them.

Here is an annual garden plant that is simple, elegant, and beautiful when being showcased in the garden border. Its long, sturdy stems branch out into smaller ones, culminating into many small pinkish-purple florets.

Mature plants can get to a height of six feet but are 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.

Many gardeners love growing this plant, for it provides outstanding color from midsummer until fall. Their long stems and floral clusters add an air of lightness and loftiness. These stems also provide perfect cut flowers for your house.

For additional garden enjoyment, the flowers attract plenty of butterflies from around the neighborhood.

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.

Although I mentioned it as an annual a few sentences ago, it can be perennial if you live in zones 7 to 10 (lucky you!)

Yucca – Adam’s Needle and Spanish Bayonet

Yucca filamentosa; aloifolia and other species



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Watching grass grow would be more enjoyable — and less time-consuming.

Here is a plant that may cause confusion for any first-time and experienced gardener. You may think it is a perennial, but botanists classify it as a stemless evergreen shrub. Its succulent, sword-like, sharp-pointed leaves emerge from the ground as a rosette — and that's that.

Within some decade (yes, you read that word right), a tall flower stalk (technically called an inflorescence) emerges. This stalk, packed with many thick-petaled, nodding bell-shaped, white or cream-colored blossoms, can grow well over seven feet tall. The whole plant looks impressive — which it is when blooming — but otherwise not. Year after year, it displays only those thick, fibrous leaves. I will now inject a bit of sarcasm here and declare I can't contain my excitement in growing this plant. I will also include a couple yawns for unbridled emphasis.

Although native to the dry southeastern to southwestern areas of the United States, this plant is hardy to zone 4 — growing in gardens even into southeastern Canada. If you must grow Yucca, be aware it comes with precautions.

You must position these plants in plenty of sunlight and soil with exceptional drainage. These plants can easily tolerate dry soil for extended periods. Constant wet soil, especially during the winter, is a death sentence. Don't bother planting them in mostly clay soil, for it can become a quagmire during the winter in most locations.

Many gardeners always complain that their Yucca plants never bloom. The best word of advice is to have patience. They will bloom — eventually. The fine print is it may take a few years for that to happen.

All Yucca species slowly mature to become bloom-ready. As with many perennials, we realize that producing several flowers and seeds takes an enormous amount of energy spent from a plant. Once you see a mature Yucca with its massive flowering inflorescence, you will understand why it waited so long to bloom.

Conclusion



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What goes down has to be up at some particular time.

I hope I have encouraged you not to be afraid of growing taller flowering plants in your flower beds and borders.

Life experiences periodic cycles, and gardening is of no exception. Cottage gardening was once the norm and then changed to low-growing bedding of single to multi-colorful annuals. Perennial plants were acceptable only if they grew shorter.

Today, with the aid of increased knowledge, greater availability to many flower varieties and colors, more professional growers, landscapers,

and homeowners are recreating the gardens of small cottages and large estates.

I suppose the cycle will swerve back to developing boring same-color beds and borders. For now, let's experience the splendor of multi-level flower gardening — starting from the ground and going way up — if you dare to do so.

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this ebook about taller-growing bedding flowers and perennials.

Please be sure to view my ebook entitled *Vines and Climbers for Your Garden*. You will learn of the many tall, colorful, and fragrant vines in further detail.

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.