

Summertime With Daisies



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Preface

New gardeners can experience confusion when confronted with the names of particular plant groups at garden centers or online flower nursery websites. Most plant classifications are straightforward, such as identifying a plant as an orchid, a carnation, or a rose.

What about a daisy? Depending on where you live and your knowledge of flowering plants, a daisy can be almost any flower that, well, looks like what a daisy is supposed to look like. And here lies the problem. Several flowers have a similar “daisy-like” appearance that mimics an honest-to-goodness daisy.

Gertrude Stein famously stated, *“A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose,”* but in this ebook, a daisy may not be a real daisy. What plant is the real daisy out of several imitations? Well, you will eventually find out, but no matter what we call a daisy, it and all similarly constructed others are just as pretty for uninterrupted summer enjoyment.

Please note that I have copied some plant descriptions from my previous ebooks and included them in this one. They include additional information and corrections of previously known mistakes, including minor grammatical and spelling errors. Other plants in this publication are new entries.

The digital photos are of the flowers at my home, public gardens, many nurseries within my area, and Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction

Mother Nature's favorite construction blueprint design among plants that resemble a daisy is called a composite. Looking like one huge flower, it is actually constructed of several smaller individual florets combined together.

Technically, composite "flowers" have two distinct patterns: the larger outer diameter florets (called rays) have distinct fused petals. In contrast, the central core (or cone) called disc florets has no distinct petals, displaying only the pistils and stamens necessary for seed formation. Don't be misled into thinking all these flowers have white ray petals and yellow disc florets. Some have orange, pink, red, and other stunning mixtures of colors.

The majority of the plants described in this ebook, being either annual or perennial, are easy to grow from seed or transplants and require minimal care. They provide long-blooming, colorful garden displays, and best of all, they will provide you with a variety of long-lasting cut flowers. Each flower serves as a perfect landing platform for all visiting pollinating bees and fabulous butterflies.

Anthemis — Roman Chamomile

Anthemis nobilis



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Let's begin with a groundcover having little daisies that cover the ground — if you allow them to bloom. Also known as Creeping Chamomile, this very hardy perennial, growing in zones 4 to 9, was once used as a lawn alternative before grass was considered more practical. As expected, these plants require ample sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil.

Used in Tudor England, this herb was used to scent bowling lawns and as a “strewing herb.” The dried or fresh herbal parts released a strong apple-like fragrance when scattered on the floor or ground and walked on during public celebrations. You can do this the next time you have a

dinner party. Your carpeting will look horrible, but the air will be fruity-fresh.

The six-inch-tall plants release this fruity perfume when you walk, roll, line-dance, break-dance, or “do the Hokey-Pokey” on it. This plant is terrific for planting along and within pathways or sidewalks. Here, you can take advantage when they bloom with half-inch diameter blossoms. At times, throughout the late spring and into summer, the display is smile-inspiring.

A “slightly related” plant, *Matricaria recutita*, commonly referred to as German Chamomile, grows taller, up to two feet, and usually flops onto the ground. It too has blossoms suitable for bedding and border displays. The main attraction is its herbal and medicinal properties, but it cannot withstand any foot traffic. Most notable is that the flowers, when dried and crushed into a powder, are used to make chamomile tea, reputed to induce sleep. However, reading this ebook may have a similar, but quicker, effect.

You can find seed packets of both *Anthemis* and *Matricaria* in published seed catalogs or online nursery websites. I have never encountered these plants sold in garden centers. To create a small lawn or pathway with these plants, you will need to purchase seeds in bulk.

Arctotis — Blue-Eyed Daisy; African Pearl Daisy

Arctotis grandis



This flower has one striking feature that is not exhibited by many other flowers. It earns praise for having an attractive sapphire blue center cone surrounded by a light-yellow ring or band. The ray petals are off-white; some gardeners call it pearl-white, for they have a slight iridescence — thus the less-common nickname of African Pearl Daisy. I adore the name and this plant! Photos do not do it justice, with the radiance of the petals and that mesmerizing blue cone.

This species comes from South Africa and is a tender perennial, hardy only in zones 10 or 11. For many gardeners, it is an annual. It loves as

much sunlight as possible and well-drained, fertile soil. It also thrives in hot and semi-dry locations. You would be very disappointed if you planted it for evening garden enjoyment. Unlike most other daisies, this species closes its flowers for the night and reopens them at dawn.

Although it produces many flowers over the summer, it can become untidy and spindly unless you clip back the spent blossoms. Doing so encourages it to make more flowers and form a more aesthetically pleasing plant. Speaking of which, try to grow many plants — one or two do not give a great display. They are easy to grow from seed, but try to sow them early indoors in the spring. You will have larger plants to set out after all frost has ended.

Garden centers and nurseries typically do not grow this plant, but online seed businesses may offer it for sale. This attractive daisy is well worth growing!

Argyranthemum — Marguerite Daisy; Paris Daisy

**Argyranthemum frutescens; Chrysanthemum
frutescens**



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Originally from the Canary Islands, this plant grows as a shrubby bush. Throughout the rest of the world, it is more likely to grow as an annual, hardy only in zones 10 or 11.

The plants commonly encountered today are hybrid strains resulting from the intermixture of related species. Most frequently found today are the typical white appearance, but newer hybrids have a variety of

colors, including pink, yellow, orange, and, surprisingly, purple-shaded petals, all with yellow disc cones. Some new cultivars (hybrid varieties) even display full double blooms.

Well-grown plants can reach under three feet tall and wide when raised in beds and borders exposed to full sun and fertile, well-drained soil. You would think it would enjoy the heat of summer, but it tends to suffer in blooming if the daytime temperature nears 80 degrees F. Periodic cutting of spent blooms will also help in retaining good blooming status.

This “daisy”, like many others in this ebook, is suitable for container planting, but for a more realistic expectation, expect a smaller height and spread. Potted plants are often found in florists’ or grocery stores.

The species (and a few non-hybrid, colorful varieties) can be grown from seed (with a six-to eight-week lead time before the last spring frost). The most attractive and best types are propagated and grown only as cuttings, which are later sold as potted plants in many mail-order nurseries.

In case you were questioning those familiar names, “marguerite” loosely means “daisy” in French, while in Greek, it means “pearl”. This may come in handy for you if you happen to appear on *Jeopardy!*. You can thank me on the show.

Bellis — English Daisy; Lawn Daisy

Bellis perennis



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Talk about an example of an anticlimactic suspense (if a non-fiction ebook were to have such nail-biter intrigue), this plant is considered the true, actual daisy. The few plants previously listed and all that follow are delegated to the “imitation-like” descriptive ensemble. Oh well, they do have some interesting qualities, so try to continue reading.

This daisy has a long history to its credit, having some good press but also a not-so-great reputation. The Latin name of *Bellis* is loosely translated as “pretty,” and *perennis* means “lasting yearly.” The common nickname of “daisy” is from the Old English pronunciation “day’s eye.” It was named (or pronounced with a slurred speech) like this because the

flowers close up at night and reopen by morning. A saying was later developed describing someone awakening in the morning and feeling “fresh as a daisy” after experiencing undisturbed nighttime sleep.

Although native throughout Europe and selective parts of Asia, its common name appears to have been bestowed upon England. Being native to such a large region, it eventually became a cherished plant that symbolized simplicity, euphoria, innocence, love, secret promises, and other touchy-feely, huggy-huggy, affectionate sentiments. It also represents beauty, fertility, motherhood, and lasting health.

That fertility quality may be an overstatement, for this plant has become an uncontrollable weed in the non-native areas of the world, including several locations in the United States and southern Canada. It self-seeds profusely in disturbed soil and has a tendency to thrive in lawns.

Once popular in bygone eras, this small-statured, rosetted, leafy, but spreading plant, with inch-diameter flowerheads featuring traditional white petal rays and yellow disc florets, blooms heavily in the spring but continues sporadically throughout the summer. Some strains will produce more petaled ray florets, forming fully double “flowers.” Some colorful, pink-to-red strains became instantly popular as a must-grow item in many garden beds and borders.

Generations ago, this was also the preferred daisy that little girls would use to make makeshift daisy-chain necklaces or bracelets. The stems apparently are flexible so that a girl could easily “weave” them together to form a chain. An example of simple pleasures at simpler times.

This daisy can be grown as an annual, perennial, or biennial. It depends on your climate: cold winters and hot summers favor annual growth, while moderate climates support perennial habits. If your locale is prime real estate, you will quickly realize this daisy can become a weed of mass abundance.

Seeds of various strains (including the species) can be purchased from some catalogs and online nurseries. As long as the seedlings have

plenty of sunlight, fertile and well-drained soil, they will bloom abundantly in a bed, border, or container. Just be vigilant that the spreading plants and abundant self-seeding do not turn your garden, lawn, and surrounding areas into a weed patch extraordinaire.

Berlandiera — Chocolate Daisy

Berlandiera lyrata



This rare plant has a noticeable aroma of chocolate or hot cocoa. You can smell this delectable fragrance many feet away when several flowers are in full bloom. Please be aware that this plant blooms from late evening until mid-morning. Afterward, it closes its petals for the rest of the day.

Plan your evenings or early morning by visiting this plant. If your first cup of coffee cannot wake you up, the delicious scent of hot cocoa will.

When I first grew this plant, I didn't realize it bloomed in the late evening and released its sweet aroma. I always noticed it was in full bloom by the early morning when visiting the garden after my long

night's nap. Within a few hours after sunrise, the petals were tightly closed.

The small blossoms are bright yellow with reddish stripes or veins on the underside of the petals. Dark red stamens and silvery-green leaves complement their appearance. The plant height is less than two feet tall, but it becomes bushy over the summer. It grows well in full sunlight but needs well-drained soil and begins blooming by midsummer. Collect seeds or dig up the tubers before winter if you live in colder locations.

Although I list it as an annual, it can be a perennial for zones 7 to 10. Try to protect the tubers over the winter in these locations by covering them with mulch. Unfortunately, it's difficult to survive in lesser zone gardens.

Brachyscome — Swan River Daisy

Brachyscome iberidifolia



Who can dismiss growing any daisy in a flower garden? Specifically, can you neglect to raise blue daisies? This Australian native, named after the Swan River in Western Australia, will never disappoint you with all-summer blooming blue-petaled blossoms with bright yellow centers. Some types also display purple, pink, and white flowers with either yellow or black centers.

They grow symmetrically mounded, making them excellent bedding plants that quickly fill an area. The flower stems rise above the foliage so that you will see an abundance of petals for most of the summer.

This plant is borderline maintenance-free, but an occasional trimming of the many spent blooms helps ensure better re-blooming splendor later in the summer. It enjoys well-drained, fertile, and most soils. That being said, excessive watering can cause the roots to rot. It can also withstand occasional drought conditions. Ensure the plants receive as much sunlight as possible to promote optimal growth and blooming. Shady locations are not ideal for good growth or blooming.

You can quickly grow this plant by seed or purchase starter plants from your local garden center for faster and longer enjoyment.

There is some confusion regarding this plant and another similar-looking daisy, known as *Felicia amelloides*, also referred to as the Cape Town Blue Daisy. Think of this one as a doppelgänger of *Brachyscome*. A doppelgänger is a person (or thing, in this case) that resembles another individual living elsewhere. For *Felicia*, you will learn more about it later on how it closely resembles *Brachyscome*, even though it looks and grows in similar circumstances on another continent.

Calendula — Pot Marigold

Calendula officinalis



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The common name “Marigold” is confusing since gardeners also call another, but unrelated flower, the Marigold technically called *Tagetes*. *Tagetes* marigolds are also members of the large Compositae family, but are usually never confused as being daisies.

Calendula produces seeds that are easy to sow and grow in any flower bed. They are large enough to handle and look different from most other flower seeds. There are many varieties, and the flower colors range from bright yellows and vibrant oranges to a mix of shades. The single-ray petal types resemble a daisy more than the double-petaled types.

The flowers make excellent cut flowers for the home and are edible — exercise caution though for some people may be allergic. The petals add vivid color to salads, rice dishes, soups, and stews. This culinary usage explains the common nickname “Pot Marigold.”

Crafters also use them as a dye to add color to fabrics and as an ingredient in skin lotions. I guess the central question is, what can't this annual do?

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 occasional clipping of old flowers helps prevent excessive seed production and encourages more flowers to bloom during the summer. They require ample sunlight and well-drained soil to thrive.

Overall, this is an excellent plant for children (and us child-like adults) to learn how to sow seeds and care for them. It also teaches us that flowers can serve other purposes beyond their aesthetic appeal.

You can easily find a variety of colors and types in almost all seed catalogs and garden centers.

Callistephus — China Aster

Callistephus chinensis



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

Native to China, North Korea, and South Korea, this colorful plant has delighted gardeners worldwide. Many people consider it an essential plant for cottage gardens. The flowers can display single to double petals in vivid colors, highlighted with a central core of bright yellow disc florets. The hybrid varieties will display flowers up to five inches in diameter.

All these descriptions are lovely for growing them for cut flowers. Still, the best trait is having long, sturdy stems culminating in a single flower. Over the summer, hybrid varieties will produce several flower clusters.

Like many other annuals, these plants quickly germinate from seed and grow. With proper care, they can bloom for most of the summer. The key is to provide the best growing conditions. They thrive in abundant sunshine and fertile, moist (but not constantly wet), well-drained soil. By understanding their preferences, you can create a confident environment that fosters their optimal growth and development.

Older varieties had a troubling habit of developing viral and fungal diseases when crowded together or grown in humid, partly shady areas. Newer types may occasionally experience this problem, but it is less severe.

For cut flower enjoyment, grow the 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 have a bushy habit. Their peony-like blossoms come in a diverse range of colors, including an intense blue variety. Each plant has the potential to produce many stems over the summer.

Chrysanthemum — Pyrethrum Daisy; Dalmatian Chrysanthemum; Dalmatian Pellitory

**Chrysanthemum cinerariifolium; Tanacetum
cinerariifolium**



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This is one of those confusion-induced, head-scratching, and face-contorting plants whose Latin identification names are interchangeable depending on which way the wind blows. It can be classified as either a *Chrysanthemum* or a genus named *Pyrethrum*, or alternatively, as another genus called *Tanacetum*. Well, for you and me, it looks like a

daisy, so we'll let the naming rights debate participants duke it out in the backyard.

Today, it appears to be officially designated as a chrysanthemum. OK. Let's all relax now. It has been referred to as a Daisy Mum because its flowers feature attractive white ray florets and yellow disc florets.

For our purposes, this plant is particularly noteworthy because it contains an essential natural insecticide called pyrethrum (or, more accurately, pyrethrin), which effectively kills all bugs — both beneficial and harmful. Compared to most insecticides available, this natural chemical is “relatively” safe for us and other animals (except for fish and other aquatic critters).

Insects will eat the flowers and leaves, but they may detest the taste, or develop a sick feeling. What makes this plant truly toxic is when vast amounts of flowers are dried and the concentrated pyrethrin chemical is “somehow” extracted.

Don't be alarmed, for pollinating insects like bees and butterflies can drink the flowers' nectar and eat the pollen. What a relief. But... applying a commercial insecticide product containing concentrated pyrethrin on all flowers will kill these beneficial insects. NOT GOOD!

Hardy from zones 5 to 9, it can be included in any bed or border, including rock gardens. It can be easily raised from seed, allowing about eight weeks before transplanting outdoors in late spring. Mature plants will reach under two feet in height and spread. Plant it in plenty of sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil, and you will have plenty of flowers for most of the summer.

Coreopsis — Tickseed

Coreopsis tinctoria; Coreopsis lanceolata



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

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.

Varieties now found in garden centers feature stunning red, pink, orange, and vibrant yellow petals, as well as additional bicolors, 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 *Coreopsis tinctoria*, also known as the **Plains Coreopsis**. Growing to over three feet, it sports many eye-catching, bright yellow daisies with brownish-red centers. You will always find new plants sprouting each spring from their 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 medium with more sand or gravel.

For your garden plants, always deadhead older flowerheads to prevent excessive seed formation, which can “shut down” further flower production for the season.

You can purchase potted plants of these various hybrids in garden centers and seeds (including several species) in wildflower catalogs.

Cosmidium — Burridge's Greenthread Cosmos

Cosmidium burridgeanum



This relatively new Texas wildflower annual is characterized by wiry stems and stunning displays of yellow-tipped, purple-red-brown, chocolate-scented blossoms.

Individual plants can grow to about two feet tall and wide. Planting a large clump or group is more attractive and provides a richer, more intense chocolate perfume for the garden. It is easy to grow from seeds sprinkled on beds, rock gardens, and containers.

The plant produces so many flowers for the summer that it will exhaust itself, especially while forming new seeds. For a little proactive

maintenance, take the time to clip spent flowers back during the summer to encourage more blooming until a fall frost.

Look for the variety called **Philippine** in published or online seed catalogs. It grows shorter and bushier than the typical species plant. You will not find this plant in garden centers, either as potted plants or in seed racks. However, you can find seeds in some internet seed businesses.

Cosmos

Cosmos bipinnatus; Cosmos sulphureus



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 which ones to grow in your garden.

Botanists say Cosmos is “ridiculously easy” to grow in any garden and rewards you with a windfall of stunning, ever-blooming flowers. They usually have long stems — perfect for cut flower bouquets. Most plants can grow to over three feet tall and quickly fill in an area over the summer.

To earn bonus points, these plants can easily tolerate general neglect, such as reduced watering and thriving in less fertile soil. If you pamper them with kindness — watch out — they will bloom themselves silly. As long as they grow in primarily 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-ray petals, but semi to fully double varieties are now being bred. To instantly attract the neighborhood butterflies, grow the impressive single-petaled varieties.

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

Delosperma — Ice Plant

Delosperma cooperi



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This stunning perennial ground cover thrives in warmer climates despite its common name suggesting the opposite. It gets this “cool” name because sunlight sparkles as it reflects off the evergreen, needle-like foliage, much like ice crystals.

Hardy to zones 5 to 10, Africa-native *Delosperma* displays small, iridescent pink, yellow, orange, purple, white, and attractive bicolor blossoms sporadically blanket the ground from spring to fall.

The plants grow under six inches but spread outward, forming an expanding carpet throughout the growing season. It is not listed as

invasive, but if it does get out of bounds, sever the shoots with a shovel or clip them off. If these shoots have attached roots, transplant them to another area. The more the merrier for your garden!

This plant may not survive the winter in colder climates, but it can still be enjoyed as a smaller-growing annual. Regardless of your climate, it requires a sunny location with well-drained, gravelly, or sandy soil to prevent root rot.

Finding potted plants ready for transplanting may depend on where you live. Although it may not be available in colder regions, purchasing them in warmer climates should be relatively easy. Sowing seeds is another, albeit a slower-developing, consideration. You can buy seed packets in several online and published catalogs.

Echinacea — Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea hybrids



Coneflowers are big, sturdy, daisies-on-steroids blooming throughout the summer. They are very hardy and make an excellent cut flower for bouquets. They are also butterfly “magnets,” for they seem to attract all the butterflies in the neighborhood.

They are carefree and thrive in the hot sun, dry soil, and, for a limited time, wet ground. Hardy from zones 3 to 10, this stunning perennial will grow to about two to three feet tall.

The colorful varieties offered today are nothing like the ones grown in your great-grandmother’s garden. Years ago, it was an under-appreciated wildflower-ornamental plant, but that has all changed.

Hybridizers or plant breeders woke up to its exciting possibilities and made an excellent plant even better.

Several new varieties are available for your garden, featuring new flower colors and fragrances not found in older species-based plants. Be prepared to experience a whole new way to enjoy and grow these bone-hardy, carefree, and dependable perennials.

Their large flowers bloom in late June and continue throughout the summer. They will eventually look rather untidy by late summer and fall, so, if you wish, clip off the spent flowers.

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 have a lovely iridescence in the sunlight.

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 nurseries and larger garden centers.

Try to avoid seed-grown strains, as they tend to revert to less outstanding colors and have smaller blossoms.

Felicia — Cape Town Blue

Felicia amelloides



As promised, there needs to be more clarity regarding this plant and another similar-looking daisy, called *Brachyscome* or the Swan River Daisy, described earlier. Think of this one as a doppelgänger of *Brachyscome*. For *Felicia*, it closely resembles it, even though it looks and grows in similar circumstances on another continent, in Africa, specifically, South Africa. My, isn't Mother Nature a trickster!

Felicia's flowers mirror those of *Brachyscome* with true-blue petals and bright yellow inner disc florets. Unlike *Brachyscome*, blue is the only color, but who cares? You can't have enough blue in any garden!

Instead of having mounding growth, *Felicia* spreads more horizontally than vertically. The flowers and stems heighten this plant while the leafy shoots extend outward. For bedding purposes, this expanding growth mimics an attractive small ground cover.

These plants are easy to maintain when grown in a sunny location with fertile, well-drained soil. Although they can withstand some drought conditions, periodic watering (and light fertilizing) is always recommended, but excessively wet soil will kill them.

Their best floral display is from late spring through midsummer. Still, afterward, with all the previously spent flowers and developing seeds, the plants will look, well... awful. Fear not; all you have to do is give the entire plant a "haircut" by clipping the top growth back to the leaf area. Within a couple of weeks, a fabulous new blue display will result in late summer and fall enjoyment.

You can sow the tiny seeds under grow lights several weeks in advance to set out the young plants after the last spring frost. However, consider purchasing starter plants from garden centers for less work and faster enjoyment.

Gazania — African Daisy; Treasure Flower

Gazania rigens



If you haven't grown this plant yet, you should. This is a fantastic annual or tender perennial, native to the southern coastal regions of Africa. It's an all-purpose plant ideal for eye-catching bedding and edging in borders. Their leaves are usually deep green but may have a silvery underside, giving them a partial shine in bright sunlight.

Those four-inch diameter "daisy" flowers radiate hot colors of bright yellow and orange, usually with a contrasting central band of molten lava red. The effect is startling once seen, and you will see plenty of these flowers from late spring till fall.

There is, however, one disappointing caveat with its blooming that tends to disappoint new gardeners. By evening, and especially during cloudy conditions, the flowers close up and remain closed until exposed to bright sunshine. These plants are true sun worshippers, thriving in hot areas and tolerating semi-drought conditions. Ensure the ground has proper drainage to prevent prolonged periods of wet soil. Allow the soil to dry between waterings if no rain is forecasted.

Unlike other flowers mentioned before and after, Gazanias are not low-maintenance, for you will need to trim off (usually called deadheading) the spent flower stalks to prevent excessive seed formation. Not doing so can make the display look messy and prevent extended blooming. Once a week, trimming your plants will keep them blooming for an additional few weeks.

You can grow different varieties from spring-sown seeds (indoors for colder locations) and later transplant them to the garden after the threat of frost or when the weather is reliably warm. Appreciating hot places, these plants waste little time growing and flowering, so don't fret if you delay transplanting for a few weeks in late spring.

You can purchase young plants in small pots or cell packs from nurseries or garden centers, but they typically offer a mix of colors. That's fine, but you may obtain something that is not incredibly colorful. Try to purchase plants of the same color (as depicted on the label, if available). For a recommendation on what to grow, try finding (either seeds or young plants) of the **Daybreak Series**, including '**Daybreak Red Stripe**' or '**Daybreak Tiger Stripes Mix**,' which have reliable complementary colors. These types are stunning!

Gerbera — Gerbera Daisy; Transvaal Daisy; Barberton Daisy

Gerbera jamesonii



You have probably seen (or impulsively purchased) this gorgeous plant in a florist or grocery store. Still, you may not be familiar with it. I'm part of that circle of clueless purchasers (mainly as a gift for someone else who is also clueless about it). The flowers are so darn pretty!

One particular instance of my occasional ignorance (yes, I am prone to contracting that embarrassing disease) is believing that one of its common names, the Barberton Daisy, is actually grown or discovered growing in Barberton, Ohio, USA. Actually, this sturdy and vibrant "daisy" hails from the town of Barberton, located in South Africa. In the

words of Homer Simpson, ***"D'oh!!"*** The right plant, but in the wrong city and country.

In my pitiful defense, my one aunt was good friends with the grandson of one of the Yoder brothers, who owned and operated Yoder Brothers, an international nursery business originally headquartered in Barberton, Ohio. The company specialized in the hybridization, growing, and selling of carnations and, especially, chrysanthemums. My sister once worked there and had the sad duty of removing and disposing of thousands of not-up-to-snuff hybrid carnation plants — while they were in full gorgeous bloom. She quit after a couple of weeks due to floral-induced depression. True story.

Okay, let me get back on track after this unfortunate derailing on the maiden description of this plant. The more common nickname is Gerbera daisy, and it is a tender perennial in South Africa. Elsewhere in the world, it is strictly an annual (hardy from zone 9 to 11) or as a potted plant.

You can plant it outdoors in well-drained, fertile soil and in full sunlight. Being adapted to a hot and semi-dry habitat, the roots tend to grow deep and wide when planted outside. You need to avoid overwatering and transplanting to prevent premature death.

This daisy forms large rosettes of deep green leaves and over-foot-tall stems, each bearing a single large bud that displays numerous single to semi-double ray-petalled flowers. The colors range from bright red, pink, orange, yellow, and white (like any daisy). Newer hybrids sport color blends or vibrant pastels. The interior cone or disc florets usually display yellow or coppery-bronze colors.

For outdoor enjoyment, the plant forms several stems over the summer and into the fall; however, potted plants typically last for only a few weeks, at best. You can also cut the blooming stems throughout the summer for long-lasting indoor displays. For more reliable summer blooming, deadhead or trim off any older, spent, faded blooms.

Surprise, surprise! You can grow this plant from seed, starting eight weeks before the last expected frost. Please note that you will receive a few seeds in a packet if you find a nursery that sells these seeds. Perform an internet search for nursery or seed businesses that sell these seeds.

Don't overwater the seedlings, but also don't neglect their watering. I know it's counterintuitive and possibly problematic, but be attentive and ensure the potting soil is well-drained.

Glebionis — Crown Daisies; Garland Daisy; Garland Chrysanthemum

Glebionis coronaria



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Not exactly a household (or should it be “gardenhold”?) name, this herb is popular in China, Japan, and the Koreas. Its primary attraction here is not for garden displays but for culinary preparations in soups, salads, garnishes, and teas. The young leaves are the prime ingredient for adding to several food dishes. Still, the eye-catching blossoms add that special *pièce de résistance* flair to any dining experience.

Those flowers are also something to behold if planted in your flowerbed, border, or containers. The ray florets are your typical daisy-

white, but around the deep yellow or orange central disc florets, there is a stunning ring of bright yellow. Some variations show all yellow flowerheads.

The plants typically grow to three feet tall (please don't faint), but can be trimmed back to allow for plenty of flower-inducing side branching. This species is more wildflower-like than garden tameness, so it will be right at home producing "rustic" or "chaotic" displays alongside other taller-growing flowers.

The plants can bloom all summer if you periodically clip back the old, spent, seed-bearing flowerheads. Please note that this plant can become invasive in your garden due to its ability to self-seed profusely.

This species is strictly an annual in most areas and grows best in ample sunlight and well-drained, preferably sandy, soil. Try not to plant in very fertile soil since this will cause excessive leafy growth and few flowers.

It can be challenging to find seeds of this plant, but you can purchase seeds from online wildflower seed catalogs. I suspect garden centers may not offer starter plants.

Helenium — Sneezeweed

Helenium autumnale



Here is a gorgeous perennial that can cause sneezing, but only if you dry the flower heads and grind them into a fine powder. The western Native Americans did this process, as well as the westward-ho pioneers. The common name they gave was “snuff.”

For those of you who are not into stuffing narcotics into your nostrils, it is nothing like powdered cocaine. Historically, snuff was powdered tobacco, but a less-addictive generic plant was substituted when you can't have the real McCoy. Thus, this beautiful flowering plant was used. Your immediate impatient question is, *“What in blazes do daisies have to do with all this snuff business?”* The answer is — nothing at all. I thought a little historical nonsense was in order.

Moving right along, and back to the primary content of this ebook, the original Sneezeweed flowers are bright yellow single-petaled “daisies.” Over the years, plant breeders (not under the influence of creating better snuff) saw great potential in establishing several colorful varieties for *eye appeal only* usage in home gardens.

Helonium grows quickly from seed sown in spring and will develop into two to five-foot-tall bushy plants by fall. Throughout this time, depending on the variety, you will encounter masses of brightly colored single to double “daisies,” attracting plenty of bees and butterflies of all sizes, colors, and species.

Make sure to grow your plants in plenty of sunshine and well-drained, fertile soil. They make excellent companion plants for many other garden flowers, especially those related to the Composite family.

Nurseries offer several varieties as potted plants or seeds. One outstandingly colorful variety is ‘**Mardi Gras**,’ with young flower heads that start as yellow but age to orange and then red. The central cone is dark brown (or black) with vibrant yellow stamens. No wonder the bees and butterflies go crazy over visiting these flowers! It, and most other colorful varieties, are hardy in zones 4-8.

Helianthus — Wild Sunflowers

*Helianthus maximiliani; grosseserratus;
tuberosus and more*



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.”

These are tough plants that survive in hot sun and dry soil. Unless you can easily identify specific differences between each species, they can all look similar. Sometimes, when two or more species grow close to each other, hybrids can also complicate identification matters.

On a historical note, American Plains Indians grew these various species as a year-long food source (saving the nutritious seeds). It was the German naturalist Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied who led an expedition into the American West during the 1830s and encountered one or more species. One species, named after him — *Helianthus maximiliani* or Maximilian’s Sunflower — grows wild in many central and eastern US states.

Another important species, the Jerusalem artichoke (*Helianthus tuberosus*), also known as sunchokes, is native to central North America. It was (and still is) cultivated for its starchy tubers. These root tubers are long-lived and thrive in the dry prairie environment.

Seeds of several varieties — tall and short — are available in many seed catalogs, and to a lesser extent, in garden centers. All you need is well-drained garden soil, plenty of sunlight, and some patience to eventually enjoy these abundant “overgrown” daisies.

Heliopsis — False Sunflower

Heliopsis helianthoides var. *scabra*



Suppose you wish to add the “WOW!” factor to your flower beds, borders, and containers. Obviously, you do. In that case, you can’t go wrong by including this hardy perennial. Although it resembles a small-growing sunflower, it technically is not one. If you look closely, the flowerhead actually resembles a cross between a smaller native sunflower and a Rudbeckia Black-Eyed Susan or Gloriosa Daisy (described later).

Hardy to zones 4-9, this plant prefers to grow in mostly sunny locations with well-drained, fertile soil. The flowers bloom in early summer and continue to bloom until fall. Seed-grown plants may differ in height, but

the average adult size will be, on average, three feet tall and slightly less wide.

The best plants to obtain from garden centers and online nurseries are name-brand varieties such as '**Bleeding Hearts**', having reddish-orange flowerheads, and '**Burning Hearts**' with yellowish-red flowers. Both types have thickened, roughish, dark purple-black foliage.

The "**Sunburst**" variety (shown above) has bright yellow flowers against white leaves heavily overlaid with green veins. Their whiteness partially reverts to a greener hue in shaded conditions.

You can collect seeds from these varieties, and the resultant seedlings may resemble their parents, but expect genetic discrepancies that result in various interesting, colorful differences.

Leucanthemum — Oxeye Daisy and Shasta Daisy

Leucanthemum vulgare and *Leucanthemum x superbum*



If you thought the Shasta Daisy (or Ox-eye Daisy) was the one and only true daisy described in the introduction, you are in the majority. Surprisingly, it is not — that title belongs to *Bellis perennis*, or the English Daisy described earlier. No matter. Let's overlook that technicality and still believe this plant is THE DAISY for summer enjoyment.

I do not know if children continue the practice of “petal-ectomies” – the practice of plucking off petals to determine if a love interest is sincere.

Still, I know farmers and botanists would love to chop off all daisies if given a chance. The reason is that the Ox-eye Daisy is weedy in many parts of the world, especially here in North America.

Native to Europe and hardy to zones 3 to 9, this tenacious plant can colonize most soils and easily out-compete native plants. Reports indicate that it began growing in North America in the 1800s. It came here as a stowaway in imported crop seed. When the plants bloomed, they caught the attention of everyone and became a must-grow plant for their gardens.

Today, botanists list the plant as one of the most invasive plants found in the United States and Southern Canada. It is against the law to sell or cultivate them in gardens in many areas. (I am not sure, but are there garden police officers on duty?)

If prime growing real estate is unavailable, these daisies are blooming their heads off near roadsides and nutrient-exhausted fields. A field or long stretches of highway lined with these daisies in the late spring are breathtaking! They are eye-candy but lack any important qualities — except for providing nectar and pollen for pollinator insects.

Couldn't someone do something so we could grow them (lawfully and safely) in our gardens? A couple of visionaries eventually did, but it took several years to do so.

The American horticulturist and plant breeder extraordinaire, Luther Burbank (1849-1926), had a brilliant idea. He wished to breed a new daisy, one that behaved itself and did 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 (*Leucanthemum x superbum*, also known as *Chrysanthemum maximum*), named after Mount Shasta in California. Seventeen years of laborious breeding work to create a new flower — think of that!

Another man helped transform the Shasta Daisy into a more widely accepted garden plant through a combination of luck and observation. All he had to do was pull a train's emergency stop cord.

English nurseryman Horace Read traveled by train one day in the 1920s, looking out the window when he suddenly spotted a semi-double-petaled Ox-eye Daisy growing near the tracks. Either he possessed outstanding vision, or the train was traveling at a snail's pace for him to see it. Giddy with excitement, he memorized the approximate location of the plant in relation to a nearby landmark.

As the train neared the remembered landmark on his return trip, Horace pulled the emergency cord, quickly stopping the train. Once entirely stopped, he jumped out, hunted for the plant, and found it. He then dug it out and safely secured it for the trip home.

There is no mention of what verbal assaults he must have faced from the angry engineer, conductor, and fellow travelers. You can imagine their response when hearing his possible reason for pulling the cord. *"I saw the most splendid specimen of Leucanthemum, and I had to have it!"* Yeah, that was a good excuse. He probably got home with a black eye and, for good measure, a bloody nose.

To Horace's credit, he would add "new blood" to a lackluster daisy. He would breed several new varieties using his cherished plant, some with fully doubled petals, better hardiness, and smaller size.

Today, the long-blooming daisies sold in garden centers and growing in our gardens are variations of this stunning plant. It is not weedy, for it can not grow well outside a garden. Best of all, the garden police will not arrest you for raising them if they were to raid your garden. As for your marijuana and opium poppy plants, well, that's a different matter.

Today, the large daisies sold in garden centers and those grown in our gardens are variations of Burbank's and Read's genetic selective work. You can grow these perennials from seed, but purchasing plants can give quicker blooming. They are hardy from zones 4 to 9 and love to bask in full to partial sunlight. Make sure they are grown in well-

drained, fertile soil for optimal growth and blooming. Being of wild heritage stock, this perennial is your basic carefree plant.

For years, the Shasta Daisy was thought to be a form of *Chrysanthemum*. However, new opinions emerged that it lacked the attributes of being a true “mum”. So, today, this daisy is assigned to its own classification of *Leucanthemum*. Whew, that was a potential heart-stopper of a naming calamity. We can all sleep better from now on.

Ligularia — Leopard Plant

Ligularia dentata; stenocephala



When you care enough to grow the very best, this bold and “muscular” perennial is impressive to see in a shady garden, but is unknown to most people. Part of that reason is that garden centers and nurseries may not offer them to the public. I believe the main reason is their size, which grows to over four feet tall. For some new gardeners, that may cause altitude sickness, but these plants are impressive when in bloom.

All Ligularias bloom by mid-summer until fall. Depending on the species, their small, yellow flowers are arranged on thick, tall stems. A representative of this would be *Ligularia stenocephala*, known as “**The Rocket**.” Another species, *Ligularia dentata*, has large clusters of

orange-yellow Black-eyed Susan-style blossoms on long, thick stems. Make sure you plant the varieties called **Othello** and **Desdemona**.

One of the most commonly planted varieties is '**Britt-Marie Crawford**', featuring dark purple leaves and reddish-purple stems, topped with large golden blossoms. James Crawford of Fife, Scotland, named this variety after his late wife, Britt-Marie. One day, while in her beloved gardens, she discovered this plant growing in a plot of 'Othello' plants. It may have been a chance seedling or a mutated section of these plants.

After her death, James wished to honor his wife's memory and her love of flowers by naming this stunning plant after her. He undertook the complicated process of introducing it into commercial production. That was a lengthy process, but it is now cultivated in numerous gardens worldwide. What a shining example of true love!

These plants are hardy in zones 4 to 8 and are native to the colder regions of China, Japan, and even Siberia. Now that's cold! They do not enjoy hot climates and dry soil; cool, moist soil is to their liking. If their large, heart-shaped, almost leathery, deep-green, toothed leaves become thirsty from dry ground, they wilt – big time. They prefer their roots to drill deep into moist, fertile soil, although they can tolerate soggy soil for an extended time.

Why are they called Leopard Plants? The big kitty cat's fur has spots, and *Ligularia* leaves can have spots or blotches of purple depending on the species and variety. But it is those leaves and flowers that command — no, demand — attention. When you see them, you won't forget them.

Osteospermum — Cape Daisy or African Daisy

Osteospermum x hybrida



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Another garden plant commonly known as African Daisy has equally pretty 3-inch diameter flowers, but without all the pinwheel stripes of the other African Daisy, *Gazania rigens*, described earlier. This species offers a variety of solid colors, usually white, yellow, orange, purple, and reddish-pink. Still, some varieties display mind-blowing exceptions — like the central disc florets having a startling metallic or electric blue color.

For more pizzazz or “bling,” the anthers have golden yellow pollen. You can also notice a few anthers metamorphosing into preemie petals (my own new word — like it?), and they are also vivid purple-blue.

Hardy only in zones 10 to 11, this plant can only be grown elsewhere as an annual or as a potted plant overwintered indoors. For late spring to late summer displays, plant it in full to partial sunlight (recommended there in harsher summer conditions), fertile, moist but well-drained soil. Newer hybrid varieties show more tolerance to humid summer heat than the species type.

You can add this plant to supplement beds and borders, and it also makes a great, unusual addition to patio containers, hanging baskets, and, for those with limited space, window boxes. As usual with these containers, make sure to have timely watering to prevent the soil from drying out.

Osteospermum can be grown from seeds, but they are relatively expensive, as only a few seeds are included in each packet. A few non-hybrid varieties are offered as seeds, usually as a mixture of complementary colors. You will need to sow them indoors about 8 to 10 weeks before the last spring frost date, and it takes an additional 10 to 20 days for germination to occur.

The seeds of this plant prefer cool soil to germinate well. Most hybrid varieties now offered as potted plants in greenhouse nurseries exhibit more vibrant coloration, longer blooming periods, and improved adaptability to summer heat. They are expensive since they are propagated by cuttings to retain their genetic uniqueness.

If you’re looking to create an eye-catching display in your garden or in containers that attracts plenty of busy bees and butterflies, this plant is a sure bet.

Rudbeckia — Black-Eyed Susan or Gloriosa Daisy

Rudbeckia fulgida and Rudbeckia hirta



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. For a carefree flower garden, consider incorporating these plants.

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. Bred from wild stock of North

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

They can suffer from extended periods of wet, 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 that they can be short-lived perennials. The blossoms can produce a tremendous amount of seed, which weakens the plant and may not survive a winter. The upside is that 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 two feet tall, is bushy, and produces boatloads of daisies for most of the summer. If you are so inclined, grab the scissors or shears and cut an armload of them as cut flowers for your house.

By late summer, they will appear (understandably so for all those flowers) “worse-for-wear.” Take the time to cut off the spent flower heads, leaving the leafy stems to remain. While you are at it, do the same with other tired-looking perennials to make them look “fresher.”

There are less-hardy (zone 8) or annual *Rudbeckia* varieties that are free-flowering and available to gardeners. *Rudbeckia hirta* features gorgeous, mixed-color flowers in orange, red, and yellow. It is also a carefree addition for a bed or border.

Many garden centers will offer these plants, as well as several other spectacular varieties.

Senecio — Mexican Flame Vine

Senecio confusus or *Pseudogynoxys
chenopodioides*



If you ever wondered if there was a vining or climbing daisy, well, here is one! This vine is native to Mexico. Without something to climb on, this plant can become a dense, sprawling ground cover spreading everywhere. No, it is not invasive, but it can be unsightly when grown that way. It is best to allow it to twist upward on any support — be it another vine, trellis, shrub, or fence.

Most gardeners will have to treat this vine as an annual, for it is only reliably hardy from Zones 9-11. The best method for propagating it is by cuttings, as seeds are rarely offered to gardeners. Surprisingly, most

garden centers never provide this plant for sale. The only way to acquire it is through online specialty nurseries. By all means, try to obtain this colorful and enjoyable plant.

If planted in full sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil, it has the potential to grow to 10 feet tall and be excessively bushy. If grown in a container, its height will be shorter. It can even thrive in a hanging basket, allowing the flowers to dangle gracefully in the air.

Speaking of the flowers, they are stunning, with an orangish-red hue, like flames of fire. They are produced in clusters, rather than individually, on a single stem. These clusters add greater visibility for us, as well as butterflies and hummingbirds, who are very attracted to these vibrant flowers.

Finally, let's take a good look at those two scientific Latin names above. *Senecio confusus* is the old-but-reliable formal name, which roughly translates as, "*I am one confused, senile old man.*" Well, that's pretty strange. It is due to the haphazard growth of the vines, the weird, twisting, and turning of the stigma-style tubes, and furry, white, bearded tufts of fibers (like dandelion seed fluff) on the old flower-heads. Botanists can undoubtedly have vivid imaginations.

The other Latin name is the "new and improved" classification. I am half afraid of the translation of this name. Don't worry (if you should ever feel the need to) about pronouncing the new name in public. When in doubt, mumble something incoherent. No one will attempt to correct you — or even care. *Senecio* will always be its name and not the "don't talk with your mouth full" new version.

Silphium — Compass Plant or Rosinweed

Silphium laciniatum



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 flowers resemble sunflowers but are not directly related to them.

Now, you don't need GPS access to navigate in your garden. Its 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 reducing the surface area exposed to direct sunlight.

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

This plant is hardy in zones 3 to 8 and enjoys as much sunlight as possible. You don't have to worry about regular watering because it tolerates drier soil conditions. 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 renowned American conservationist, environmentalist, and author Aldo Leopold wrote in his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, about the decline of the prairie's 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 hope we can find and cultivate this fantastic plant in our flower gardens.

Stokesia — Stokes Aster

Stokesia laevis



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While walking among the display beds at my favorite arboretum garden, I always see several of these beautiful, four-inch, purple-blue flowering plants for most of the summer. At first, I never knew what it was because the identification tags were missing. The petals, when fully extended, were frilly, but they looked like an Aster. Later, I discovered it's a *Stokesia* plant. Here is a prime example of how appearances can be deceiving.

Named for English physician and botanist Jonathan Stokes (1755-1831), it is a native wildflower in the southeastern parts of the United

States. Mother Nature decided this would be the only species, for it has no other close relatives.

Hardy in zones 5 to 10, it grows well in full to partial sunlight on a variety of soil types, but requires well-drained conditions, especially during winter. Constantly wet or ice-covered soil will kill it, so ensure the soil is well-draining and porous.

For someone who loves to discover new plants to grow in a garden, it was confusing to me why I had never encountered this plant before, especially in nurseries and garden centers. In case you haven't discovered it yet, be sure to search for and grow the variety called **Peachie's Pick**.

Discovered growing in her flower garden a few years ago, Mississippi gardener and florist, Peachie Saxon, knew she had something extra special. This plant grew differently (and better) from all other seed-grown plants in her garden. It displays shorter-sized plants (two feet tall) with much larger, upright-facing, deeper blue flowers.

The plant's 'icing-on-the-cake' most valuable trait is that the flowers are sterile. Wild-grown plants self-seed with abandon, but Peachie's plant does not. This is ideal for it saves valuable energy to produce longer blooming and offers extra hardiness.

Another variety to look for is **Honeysong Purple**, which features deeper purple flowers and shorter, more compact growing stems.

Stokesia provides plenty of cut flowers over the summer and enticing nectar for several butterfly species, especially swallowtails. These delightful varieties will entice you into growing several in your garden. Who can pass up having gorgeous blue flowers in a garden?

Symphotrichum — New England Aster; Michaelmas Daisies

Symphotrichum novae-angliae; Aster novae-angliae, and other numerous species



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These stately plants, native to North America, display their flower clusters with bright purple ray florets and yellow disc floret centers across the fall rural landscape and residential gardens. **Heath Asters** (*Symphotrichum ericoides*) display hundreds of small, more “traditional” white flowers in late summer and early fall.

One representative with beautiful purple flowers is the **New England Aster**, shown above. Older reference books list this plant as *Aster novae-angliae* (which I grew up with). Still, botanists now classify it as *Symphotrichum novae-angliae*. Let's quickly say that name several times! Between you and me, let's keep it named Aster (for I don't want to wear out my fingers typing the new Latin name!)

I think there's never a disaster growing an Aster in any garden. From the Latin word meaning "star," Asters bloom in late summer and into fall. If you need an all-purpose, hardy, and carefree plant, you cannot go wrong with having them in your garden. Although they bloom alongside Chrysanthemums, they are more vigorous than the "mums."

Many wild aster species act as weeds because they self-seed profusely in favorable growing conditions, such as fertile and moist soil and sunny locations. They can tolerate drier soil, partial shade, and less-than-ideal habitats, but may grow shorter. Most varieties are hardy from zones 3 to 8.

We can develop these wild plants in our gardens by periodically clipping off the top and side-growing shoots (similar to cultivating Chrysanthemums) until mid-summer, creating a low-growing, bushy, cushiony plant by Autumn. The resultant flowering will amaze you!

New types are being selected each year with various colors and growth habits. A new garden variety is **Sapphire Mist** (*Aster dumosus* or *Aster dumosum* — even the growers and sellers get confused about exact names). This type has dazzling blue daisies from midsummer to fall and grows as a cushion or low-growing mound. By all means, plant it with Chrysanthemums for a rainbow of vivid autumn colors.

Tanacetum — Feverfew

Tanacetum parthenium, Chrysanthemum parthenium, Matricaria parthenium



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Now we are about to enter *The Twilight Zone* of gardening (minus the compelling introduction of the late, great Rod Serling). There is some confusion over the Latin names of some (many?) members of the Compositae family. On one day, a plant is classified in one genus. Later, reassigned to another group, and a little later reassigned yet again to another named group. Back and forth we go in the name game. You will see why I added this statement, for you will encounter another *Tanacetum* (or *Chrysanthemum*, or *Matricaria*) flower next, and it is totally different than this one about to be described.

For us, let's forget about this Latin nomenclature nonsense and stick with the common name. This one is called **Feverfew**, and here is its story.

Native to southeastern Europe, this long-enduring, historically significant herb was cultivated extensively in numerous old-fashioned cottage gardens. Not only was it beloved for the excessive blooming of its small flowers (remarkably resembling miniature Shasta daisies), but also of its powerfully aromatic, chrysanthemum-looking foliage, which, "supposedly," helped alleviate everything from head and muscle aches to reducing high fever — thus, the feverfew nickname. The idea is to drink tea made from its dried leaves and flowers to alleviate your specific problem.

Some people swear by this homeopathic solution, but potential medical issues can also be encountered. The safe solution is to please get in touch with your GP doctor if you are, or wish to be, pregnant, using chemotherapy, using blood clotting meds, or are known to be allergic to ragweed or other related flowers, before partaking in drinking this tea. You can make your body exhibit even worse problems by doing so.

Anyway, the best practice for using this perennial plant is growing it in your flower garden. It is hardy from zones 5 (possibly 4) to 9, long-blooming from early summer to fall, but also has the habit of producing an abundance of seeds during this time. This, unfortunately, limits its lifespan to a maximum of two to three years. The best recourse is to periodically cut back the plant's older blooming stems during the summer.

Feverfew enjoys growing in as much sunlight as possible, supplemented with fertile, well-drained soil. The height of each plant can exceed two feet, but feel free to cut back each young stem to encourage side-branching to occur. This stimulates the development of numerous new flowers.

If you value helping your neighborhood's pollinating bees and butterflies (which you should), this is one of the best attractors for

them. Maybe the nectar and pollen help alleviate their tiny headaches, joint, and muscle soreness. Well, perhaps not.

Seeds can be purchased from numerous printed or online seed catalogs, especially those offering wildflower seeds. You can scatter the seeds in your flower beds or borders, or germinate them indoors and later plant out the young plants after the last spring frost. Garden centers may not offer this plant.

Tanacetum — Painted Daisy

Tanacetum coccineum



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The generic name is the same, but this is an entirely different plant from the one above. Then there is more confusion with the previously mentioned *Chrysanthemum cinerariifolium*, known as the Pyrethrum Daisy.

This very hardy perennial (zones 3 to 7 — hot and humid summers limit blooming and survivability) can still amaze all admirers with the beauty of these daisies. The bushy plants can reach up to three feet tall and display prominent, long-stemmed flowers with ray florets that range in color from bright red to pink or white. In contrast, the central

disc florets are the usual bright yellow. The three-inch diameter flowerheads can be single or double.

One longtime favorite strain is **Robinson's Crimson**, which has slightly larger flower heads and can be easily grown from seeds or transplanted plants. This strain blooms from late spring until mid to late summer, provided it grows in plenty of sunlight, fertile, well-drained soil, and is periodically deadheaded to remove spent blooms.

Their floral displays look stunning when numerous plants are grown together for all perennial beds, borders, and wild-looking rock or meadow gardens. By late summer, allow some spent flowers to self-seed, allowing them to bloom again in the future. One added bonus of raising these plants is that they make excellent cut flowers for your indoor enjoyment.

Tithonia — Mexican Sunflower

Tithonia rotundifolia



Unlike most relatives of sunflowers, this eye-catching annual plant typically grows to an average height of five feet. It features vibrant, orange-red to pure yellow flowers. The plants are bushy, and there will be many blossoms to enjoy from summer to fall.

Tithonia is native to Mexico and also grows wild in Central America. It is easy to grow from seed and raise in any garden.

It loves to grow in full sunlight and tolerates less fertile, drier soil. This 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.

The seeds are large enough to handle and so simple to insert into the well-drained soil.

The variety called **Torch** is available as seed from many catalogs and garden centers. It is perfect for children's gardens, as it grows to a moderate height, is bushy, and serves as a favorite hangout for all the neighborhood butterflies and hummingbirds.

Conclusion

Other garden plants, such as chrysanthemums, dahlias, sunflowers, strawflowers, marigolds, and zinnias, also share the composite flower construction with all the above-listed plants. They usually have a unique appearance of their own, such as displaying different floral shapes and sizes, unlike the typical single-petaled “looking like a daisy.”

Daisies tend to be more simplistic in appearance. That may be why they have been historically popular. They represent simpler times and activities, reminiscent of old-fashioned cottage gardening, cut flower gathering, childhood activities, and all-around peacefulness.

Ages ago, there was a silent Victorian Era language involving the giving of flowers. It was called floriography. Each type of flower held a special meaning expressed by the giver to the recipient. A bouquet of daisies, especially those having the traditional white rays and yellow disc cone florets, signified trust, loyalty, innocence, and well-being. If you wished to convey a wholehearted attachment of friendship and love to a friend, daisies were the “secret” non-spoken message communicated from one heart to another.

Grow and hand-deliver some daisies to someone special in your life this coming summer. That’s a great way to warm and brighten anyone’s day!

Thank You for reading this ebook

It is my hope that this publication has enlightened you to the many species and varieties of those garden flowers we can call daisies. These, and others not listed, will provide your gardens with outstanding beauty for all summer into fall enjoyment.

Please visit my author website, <https://gedwinvarner.com> for information about 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 experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

He successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery for twenty years. 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.