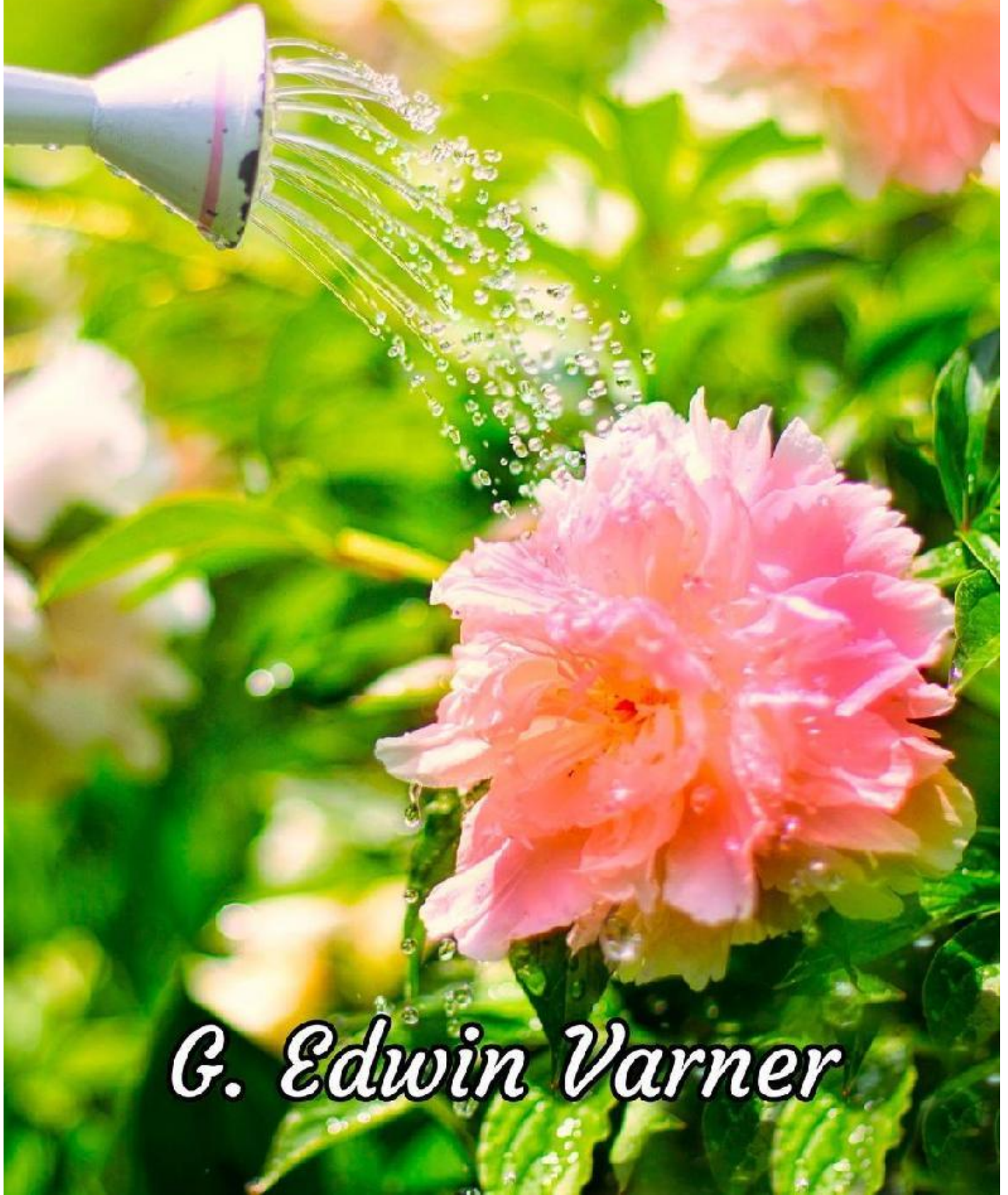


Water-Saving Garden Flowers



G. Edwin Varner

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WATER-SAVING GARDEN FLOWERS

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Preface

This entertaining ebook describes popular flower garden plants considered drought-tolerant or able to thrive with limited watering needs.

With dryness becoming the new 'normal' in many areas and frequent rain becoming a rarity, it's clear that we need to adapt to water-saving gardening practices. Record-high temperatures are now a constant, and with predictions of continued dryness, it's essential to find new ways to grow our flower and vegetable plants.

Understanding your garden soil attributes and what plants can tolerate growing there will help lower watering needs, save time, and decrease expenses.

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

I must also acknowledge that I have edited some photos to increase sharpness and brightness and adapt them to this ebook format. However, I have tried to keep the flower colors as close to their true nature as possible, avoiding any enhanced extravagances.

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

Introduction

Garden hoses and I do not get along well. Watering cans are also problematic for me. No matter the ways and means of transporting water to thirsty plants, I can find frustrations that make me hot under the collar when it's hot over my collar during several weeks of a heat wave. The hoses always kink when advertised not to, and they steadfastly twist counterclockwise when I try to coil them clockwise. They also manage to leak at every connection.

Watering cans are universally "handy" for carrying water, giving our arms a non-gym workout. Still, their troublesome design lies with their attached sprinkling head. The best (and most expensive) ones have small holes providing a gentle sprinkling of water. Unfortunately, most cans offered to the public have plastic heads with larger holes that gush water out, like Niagara Falls, drenching, smashing, and obliterating any seed bed or young plant.

So, what can we do to ease these watering concerns during hot and arid days? This ebook offers practical advice and reviews popular garden flowering plants that can handle occasional (and even extended) severe droughts while still providing beautiful blooming. With this knowledge, you'll be well-prepared for the challenges of a dry summer.

Several plants, especially perennials, shrubs, and trees, adapt to occasionally arid conditions when fully mature. Please understand that there are limits to less watering that can seriously affect any plant's growth, blooming, and survivability. Plant growth and adaptability depend on your regional climate, water retention in your garden soil, and methods for helping retain that soil moisture for as long as possible during a lengthy period without rainfall.

This publication will help you discover several popular and surprisingly adaptable herbaceous flowering plants that will help lower your ever-increasing water bills, decrease your time and labor in watering, and still provide plenty of beauty throughout a dry growing season.

Although not listed, many flowering shrubs and trees, particularly those older or more mature, will also easily survive these “dry times.” Still, if you can manage the work and added water bill expense, a good drink of water for all your botanical “pets” will surely be appreciated and will reward you with continued future floral enjoyment.

Achillea – Yarrow

Achillea millefolium



Considered a weed, wild-growing Yarrow thrives in disturbed areas. This alone instantly qualifies it and hybrid descendants as easily surviving periods of extended drought. What we consider weed-based flowering plants transformed into popular garden plants signifies their heritage will help them survive water-impooverished times. This ebook will further extend the low-maintenance quality to other similar drought-tolerant plants.

Wild-growing Achillea flowers are not “eye-popping” pretty. Through hybridization with other related species, growers have created colorful varieties with less aggressive weedy growth habits. The clusters of flowers are beautiful, and the plants exhibit carefree growth. They are a

great example of one of your “plant and forget” perennials. Once mature after a year or two, *Achillea* tolerates the usual summer drought with an occasional watering—if at all. You will not have to care for it, but spend the time admiring the colorful flower clusters.

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

Famous for cottage and wild gardens, this hardy perennial (zones 3 to 9) works best in an informal flower bed, such as one devoted to wildflowers.

These “flattened” flower clusters, called corymbs, can be white, light to dark pink, red, or bright yellow. If planted in full sun and well-drained soil, they bloom all summer. The dark-green to silvery-white, serrated leaves (depending on the variety) are attractive and pungently herbal-scented.

Agastache – Mexican Hyssop; Anise Hyssop

Agastache aurantiaca



Agastache, also known as 'Hyssop' in older garden literature, is a captivating native southwestern North American plant. It thrives in hot, dry, gravelly soils, making it a unique addition to any garden. Hardy to

zones 6 and above, it can even survive in zone 5 when planted in a southern exposure area with well-drained soil.

As they mature, these perennials produce hundreds of small, brightly colorful salvia or sage-like blossoms that bloom all summer into the fall. Rubbing the leaves releases an exhilarating peppermint or anise fragrance, creating a sensory experience that is simply addictive!

The flower colors of Agastache plants are a breathtaking blend of apricot, orange, peach, yellow, a hint of pink, and rose. Their buds usually have a contrasting tint of purple, adding to their visual appeal. When the sun shines through the petals, they glow like hot embers, creating a stunning visual display in any garden.

These plants prefer growing in as much sun as possible and well-drained soil. They grow to over three feet tall and become very bushy. Because of their desert heritage, they tolerate drier soil (and extended drought) longer than most other perennials.

Avoid over-fertilizing these plants to increase the likelihood of surviving a frigid winter. Adding a fresh layer of compost in the spring is all they need to grow and bloom well over the summer. Without excessive nutrient “goodies,” they will harden their woody stems for better winter survival.

Several varieties are easily found in garden centers, small nurseries, and online establishments. Some types can be grown from seed, but the best strains are from propagated stock.

We are not the only ones who go wild for these plants; hummingbirds and butterflies also love them. Hummingbirds and these plants go together like a hand and glove. They will dart from blossom to blossom, sipping nectar as they hover about them. If you want to attract your neighborhood hummingbirds, these perennials are necessary.

Include these plants if you want your private summer carnival in your garden. With all the colors, pleasant aromas, and hummingbird flying acts, your garden will be a fun place to visit.

Asclepias – Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca



Native to North America, this commonly encountered zone 3 to 9 perennial is found in the eastern half of the United States and southern Canada. It has also become established as a weed in parts of Europe. It grows in groups or patches, alongside roads, and in disturbed ground and cultivated crop fields. It should be included in out-of-the-way and difficult-to-water areas of a garden.

This species displays a robust growth habit and prefers sandy to gravelly, well-drained soils and as much sunlight as possible. It blooms all summer with large ball-shaped clusters of sweetly scented pink blossoms.

It can take two or three years from seed to establish blooming plants, but they will live for several years. Mature plants can grow to over three feet tall and wide.

Environmentalists urge us to plant this beautiful species in any vacant corner of our gardens. This may have seemed unconventional in the past, but times have changed. The reason for this shift is the survival of the Monarch Butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*). This colorful insect relies on this plant (and other milkweed relations) for survival. The larva of this butterfly feeds on the leaves, absorbing the toxic milky juice they contain. This chemical defense keeps birds and predaceous insects from eating the species, making it a crucial part of the butterfly's survival.

This milkweed, well-known for its tough resilience, easily withstands any period of drought. A significant part of this adaptability is it develops a large and deep burrowing taproot. Whatever dryness happens in the upper few inches of soil, further down lies enough moisture to maintain rehydration and constant growth and bloom. So, if you're worried about watering, don't be. It's a low-maintenance addition to your garden, thriving even in those troublesome areas where nothing else seems to grow.

Aster (or Symphyotrichum) – New England Aster

Aster novae-angliae or *Symphyotrichum novae-angliae*



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, let's keep it listed as Aster between you and me. 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 in color and bloom season. 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.

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 chosen for better qualities. Some of these qualities are disease resistance, improved flower colors, and increased hardiness and vigor. Adaptability to fluctuating environmental encounters, such as drought conditions, is also beneficial.

Asters are one such group of plants that botanists and growers manipulate 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 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 abundantly in favorable growing conditions such as fertile, moist soil and sunny locations. It can tolerate drier soil, partial shade, and less-than-ideal productive habitats, such as gravelly rock gardens.

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

Begonia

Begonia tuberosa hybrida; boliviensis; semperflorens

Mother Nature appears to have favorite flowers. She has outdone herself in creating many types of plants. Still, Begonias are a prime example of her endearment, for she has over 1,300 species. Most of these species are tropical or semi-tropical but grow well in partly shaded flower beds or containers. A few types will surprise you because they can survive drought conditions for a limited time.

Most begonias are thick and fleshy and grow best in well-drained soil that periodically dries. If the stems and tubers are subjected to soggy soil, they will rot and kill the plant. Some begonias develop tubers or thickened rhizomes (stems) that act as energy storage structures to survive during the dry seasons in the tropics but will die if subjected to freezing conditions.

No matter what type of growth, size, or shape, their popularity lies in their showy and colorful leaves and flowers. The flowers can be simple, single-petaled blossoms to flamboyant, billowy, large-petaled ones. Their leaves can be dark green to bronze with random contrasting patterns.

Let's focus on three types of Begonias that can thrive in partly sunny to shady locations. While they can adapt to full sunlight, it's best to provide dappled sunlight or partly shaded locations and well-drained, fertile soil. These conditions ensure excellent growth in bedding locations or any container.



The Tuberous Begonias (*Begonia tuberosa hybrida*) are popular annuals that are usually grown for display in hanging baskets and containers. They are tender plants treated as annuals, even though you can save the tough, fibrous, concave-shape tubers over the winter. That's the theory, but the tubers may dry and die by spring. I recommend purchasing new plants each spring in any nursery or garden center.

Tuberous Begonias produces those colorful and flamboyant “fluffy” flowers that resemble roses. These are the male blossoms, while the female flowers are less excessive in the number of petals.

These plants are sensitive to wet soil, for the tubers and stems can rot if not grown in well-drained, porous soils. They can adapt to full sunlight, but the harsh heat can damage the blossoms and leaves. Deep shade limits blooming and can make the stems and leaves too floppy and succulent, providing prime conditions for fungal and other disease

problems. So, the best “Goldilocks condition” – not too hot, wet, or shady – is growing these plants in partly sunny or dappled shady areas.

All garden centers offer these Begonias each spring. The 'NonStop' selections, known for their continuous and abundant flowering, are a tried-and-true variety to purchase. They come in various colors, including red, pink, and white, and are an excellent choice for adding a pop of color to your garden or containers.



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The Trailing Begonia, or *Begonia boliviensis*, is a low-maintenance beauty that looks best when cascading from hanging baskets. These plants act as a fountain, growing upright, flopping over, and causing the ever-blooming single or semi-double flowers to dangle downward over the basket. The best part? You don't have to pluck off the spent flowers, making maintenance a breeze.

For this begonia, you can suspend it in full sun to partial shade for the best-blooming potential, but make sure the potting soil is fertile and well-drained. Fertile soil is rich in nutrients essential for the plant's growth and flowering. Well-drained soil allows excess water to escape, preventing root rot. A good potting mix with added perlite or sand for drainage is ideal. The plant can tolerate dry conditions for an extended period, but weekly watering is perfect if no rain has fallen.



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The most commonly grown Begonias offered to gardeners are the ordinary, low-growing annual Wax or Bedding Begonias (*Begonia semperflorens-cultorum*)—as shown above. Their flower colors include red, rose, pink, and white. The “waxy” or shiny leaves are grass-green to reddish-bronze.

Of all the Begonias, these are more tolerant of growing in full sun, but partly shady areas highlight their beauty. If you ever become tired and

disillusioned over constantly planting Impatiens in shaded areas, these are a great substitute. But, unlike Impatiens, these plants dislike growing in consistently moist soil. Hooray—you can save money on that monthly water bill! Well-drained but fertile soil that periodically becomes dry is to their liking. Otherwise, constant wet soil will rot the roots and stems.

I have seen spectacular bedding displays of these plants growing in partly-shady slopes or banks. They had excellent drainage here, and the abundant pink and white blossoms brightened areas under several large trees all summer and into the fall.

Even though they are excellent bedding plants, we should always appreciate the practicality of growing them in containers to highlight those dull areas on a patio or deck.

From teeny tiny seeds, mighty pretty Begonias will bloom. Yes, you can raise all Begonias from seed, but that can prove challenging even to the best “green thumb” gardeners. I gave up doing so eons ago and purchased plants from nurseries. The reason for this difficulty is their seeds are almost like dust. Naturally, you can raise blooming plants by sowing them, but it takes specific conditions and time – lots of time. Fortunately, many nurseries and garden centers offer plenty of inexpensive plants.

Catharanthus – Annual Vinca or Madagascar Periwinkle

Catharanthus roseus, formerly Vinca rosea



Why is this plant grown less often? It loves to grow in hot conditions and full sunlight and tolerates dry soil and moderate periods of drought. It also provides many colorful flowers above glossy green foliage all summer. This unfortunate overlook may be because we try to avoid growing beautiful flowers in sun-burning, hot, dry soil. Few plants appreciate those conditions. I know I avoid planting my flowers in such places.

Growing to less than two feet tall and wide, Vinca blooms well in a bed or containers. By planting them in fertile and well-drained soil, you do

not have to worry about the occasional dry-out of the soil. They will bloom well if they receive plenty of sunlight during the day.

Annual Vinca is native to the island nation of Madagascar, which explains why it loves all things hot and dry. Although the name is similar, gardeners should distinguish it from the perennial, sky-blue-flowered groundcover Vinca or Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*).

The flower color of Annual Vinca ranges from shades of pink, lavender, neon rosy-red, and white. Most have a white or deeper color center (the “eye”) to each blossom. White flowers can have a delightful, vivid, reddish-rose center.

Please don’t plan to sample any, but the sap from this plant is very poisonous. However, chemicals in this sap show promising results in killing cancer cells, such as leukemia. Who knows what medical miracles this and other garden flowers can cure?

Annual Vincas can be a challenge to find in commercial garden centers. You may have better luck by visiting smaller nurseries unafraid to grow unusual plants. You can find seeds in more massive seed catalogs, but raising these plants from seeds may prove difficult. Germination and growing conditions need constant warm and moist soil. Cold temperatures only delay germination and stunt seedling growth.

If you can locate well-grown young bedding plants (sold in plastic 4-packs), latch on to them. These plants are well worth growing!

Centaurea – Dusty Miller or Silver Dust

Centaurea cineraria



Centaurea is the ever-popular annual bedding plant enjoyed for its bright, silvery-white leaves. Depending on the variety, the appearance of these leaves ranges from being “whole-leaf” to lacey or serrated, which adds a stunning contrast to other colorful annuals and perennials grown in the garden. This plant also makes an impressive brightening display or highlights any area when grown in containers.

Most varieties grow to less than two feet tall but can be bushy. Growing it in plenty of sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil will thrive for your summer enjoyment. I once had this plant survive my Zone 5 garden, but the odds are better in living through a Zone 6 and up during the typical winter.

It makes a great edging plant to complement brightly colorful annual flowers or colorful or darkened foliage. The same concept applies to container plantings. No gardening law (at least, not yet passed by Congress) states you can't have an entire bed, border, or planter filled with them.

This plant can form small flowers during summer but is an irritating distraction. Most people snip them off to keep the shiny, leafy appearance intact.

You can grow this plant using seeds or purchasing starter plants in garden centers. Several new vegetative-propagated varieties are available in garden centers, having brighter silver or white foliage, growing only to a foot tall, and forming a mound. They are bred for planters, hanging baskets, or smaller beds. They can be grown alone or highlight other smaller flowering or foliage plants. Two available types are **Chrome Fountain** with shiny silver leaves and **Snowy Owl** with pure white whole leaves. They both look fantastic when grown in a sun-exposed planter!



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To slightly complicate matters, another plant unrelated to the above *Centaurea* plants is *Senecio candicans* "**Angel Wings®**." It is also labeled as a Dusty Miller because of its large, rounded leaves that are as bright as a white cloud.

It also enjoys plenty of sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. Once well established, it can tolerate dry soil for extended periods. That is a bonus when displaying it as an outstanding container or potted subject.

The only fault it has is its cold hardiness zone 8 limitation. We cold-climate gardeners have to accept it as an annual. Still, it shows promise of being a winter-over houseplant if given a warm, sunny windowsill to bask on.

This cutting-grown variety, offered only as small potted starter plants, should be available at garden centers and larger nurseries. If it is

outside your area, search for rare-plant nurseries online.

Coreopsis – Tickseed

Coreopsis lanceolata and verticillata



These attractive annual and perennial plants are beautiful and remarkably low-maintenance, making them perfect for any garden. The perennial varieties, in particular, are a breeze to grow and, once established, require little to no attention, becoming a hassle-free, worry-free addition to your garden.

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, and the other half are native to Central and South American regions. Breeders have been very busy creating colorful hybrids with these species. Varieties now found in garden centers have stunning red, pink, orange, and vibrant yellow petals with additional bi-colors,

bizarre stripes, and splotches—all on plants ranging in different heights.

Coreopsis will bloom almost all summer if planted in full sunlight in fertile, well-drained soil incorporated with plenty of sand or pea-size gravel. The plants dislike clay-based soils, which can cause excessive water retention, especially in winter. Too much water (and ice) will kill the central growth crown.

Once your plants become fully established after one or two years, you can “set them” on auto-pilot to adapt and even thrive in all environmental circumstances, including recurring drought.

For a perennial species or variety having pure yellow double flowers, you can’t go wrong planting *Coreopsis lanceolata* ‘**Early Sunrise**.’ It grows shorter and bushier than others of its kind. Still, it is easy to grow, makes excellent cut flowers, and is trouble-free.

Coreopsis verticillata ‘**Threadleaf Coreopsis**’ (shown above) is also a perennial species. Offered by nurseries as **Zagreb** (named after the Croatian capital of Zagreb), this type has a mass of thread-like, dark green foliage. Single-petaled, bright yellow blossoms cover the plant most of the summer. It is hardy to Zone 4.

Anna, my endearing elderly neighbor (age 96, who passed away earlier this publication year), had a large clump thriving for over 20 years. She neglected to care for it, for she rarely gardened because she was allergic to bee and wasp stings. Her plants, without any care, keep getting more beautiful each year. Periodic parched soil—some summers more so—never deterred them from blooming. Don’t we wish all plants did this?

Echinacea – Coneflower

Echinacea



If you have a limited flower garden area and time to care for your flowers, coneflowers should be your first perennial choice. These beautiful and remarkably low-maintenance plants require little watering even when a drought maintains its arid grip during the summer. This makes them perfect for a busy gardener like you, giving you the confidence that your garden will thrive even with your busy schedule.

Coneflowers are not just flowers; they are big, sturdy daisies on steroids blooming throughout the summer. Their beauty is unmatched, making them an excellent choice for bouquets. And the best part? They are butterfly “magnets,” adding a touch of life and color to your garden.

These plants thrive in the hot sun and dry soil. Hardy from zones 3 to 10, they will grow from two to three feet tall.

Today's colorful varieties are nothing like those 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 awoke to its exciting possibilities, making an excellent plant even better.

New varieties are available for your garden based on 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 all summer. By late summer and fall, they will eventually look rather untidy, so clip off the spent flowers if you wish.

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 you grow in your garden? I say, go crazy! Get whatever flamboyantly colorful variety you can find! There are many outstanding cultivars offered. It is challenging to narrow down one or two types, but that's the fun of it. Many of these are available as plants at several nurseries and larger garden centers, so why not try a few different ones?

Avoid seed-grown strains, for they revert to less outstanding color and will have smaller blossoms.

Eryngium – Sea Holly

Eryngium maritimum



Sea Holly can withstand climates of zone 5 and up and is a native of the sun-soaked coastal beaches of Europe. Its clumps can grow to an impressive three feet tall and wide and bloom from midsummer until fall. With their shiny appearance, the flower heads and surrounding bracts resemble large ice crystals or delicate snowflakes, adding a unique touch to any garden. It also adapts well in rock gardens or borders supplemented with gravel-enhanced garden soil.

Magnificent varieties are available, such as **Blue Jackpot**, **Big Blue**, and even a smaller type called **Blue Hobbit** (initially found in Middle-earth nurseries—sorry, a lame *Lord of the Rings* joke), which has a beautiful

blue coloration. Various nursery sources refer to the color as “electric blue.” That should spark some interest in purchasing them.

Being exposed to the harsh sun and salt spray, the entire plant adapts to overheating and water loss by secreting a reflective waxy coating. What a strange paradox — naturally growing in hot, sunny locations while looking like ice crystal props in Disney’s animated *Frozen* movies.

Years ago, wild plants were common near dunes. Today, botanists discover fewer populations because people steal them for their flower gardens. This does not have to be, for you can grow attractive varieties from seed or purchase nursery plants.

You can also enjoy the flowers for the winter by drying the stems in the fall. Once dry, you can spray them with bright silver (gorgeous!), metallic blue, or gold paint sold in hardware or hobby stores. They make unusual and beautiful Christmas and winter decorations.

Eschscholzia – California Poppy, Golden Poppy

Eschscholzia californica



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This stunning annual is a must-have for your flower garden, especially if you're a self-proclaimed semi-lazy gardener (no disrespect, given that many people lead hectic lives). It is one of the most visually appealing sow-on-the-ground flowers. As a biennial, you must wait until the following spring to enjoy your beds or borders with its brilliant golden yellow, orange, red, and eye-catching pink flowers.

Being a sow-and-forget plant, don't count on them germinating "this year." You will probably forget about them until next year when they

sprout, grow, and bloom. Their seeds tend to be excessively hard and need plenty of moisture (and possibly exposure to cold soil) to initiate germination. Yes, I know. You are thinking, “*Needing plenty of water to germinate? I thought we were discussing drought conditions?*” Please remember that drought is not permanent, and rainfall will eventually occur – sometimes excessively. This will trigger this plant’s seeds to germinate and seedlings to grow and develop quickly. Once established, the young plants can adapt to drier soil. Each spring, new plants grow and bloom abundantly in a south-facing border of my house that dries out repeatedly throughout the summer.

This plant’s adaptation to arid soil is not surprising, given its native habitat in the arid areas of the far-western USA—notably California and Mexico. You may recall past news reports of vast regions of dry hills and valleys in full bloom after previous prodigious fall and winter rainfall, a testament to this plant’s resilience.

These poppies have finely divided or feathery blue-green leaves topped with single to semi-double blossoms. The height of this bushy plant can be, on average, a foot tall, but if it is taller, it will flop over. This is of no concern, for new shoots always produce more flowers. The only “problem” is that the petals close up at night and during cool, cloudy, and rainy days.

The plants grow best in sunny beds and borders with well-drained soil but prefer less fertile conditions, unlike most other garden flowers. If excessively fertilized, you can expect more stems and leaves but few flowers.

Find a less-than-ideal area by your home and scatter the seeds. They will amaze you with their growth, which will be increased by excessive flowering and new self-sown seeds for the following year.

There are several varieties or strains of these plants. You can easily find the bright yellow to golden yellow-flowered species in garden center seed racks, including a brilliant red form called **Red Chief**. Online nurseries offer a more comprehensive selection, including types with pastel and ruffled petals.

Gazania – African Daisy; Treasure Flower

Gazania rigens



If you have yet to grow this plant, you should. This is a fantastic annual or tender perennial native to the southern coastal regions of Africa. Related to the vast Aster family with large daisy-like “clustered flowers,” it’s an all-purpose plant for bedding and edging in borders. Its leaves are usually deep green but may have a silvery underside, giving them a partial shininess in bright sunlight.

Imagine a garden filled with these four-inch-diameter daisy flowers, radiating hot colors of bright yellow and orange, usually with a

contrasting central band of molten lava red. The effect is stunning, and you will be greeted by these vibrant blooms from late spring until fall.

However, one disappointing caveat with its blooming tends to disappoint new gardeners. By evening, and especially during cloudy conditions, the flowers close up and remain that way until exposed to bright sunshine. These plants are true sun worshipers, thriving in hot areas and don't mind occasional drought conditions. Ensure the ground has proper drainage to prevent extended periods of wet soil. Allow the soil to dry between waterings if no rain is forecasted.

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

Don't be intimidated by the thought of growing Gazanias. You can easily 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. These plants appreciate hot places and waste little time growing and flowering, so they will still thrive even 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 usually offer mixed colors. That's fine, but you may obtain something not incredibly colorful. Try to purchase same-color plants (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 complimentary colors. These types are stunning!

Hemerocallis – Daylily

Hemerocallis fulva hybrids



This perennial is ideal if you want to consider another supremely colorful candidate for planting in a low-maintenance, occasional drought-experienced garden.

In Greek, Hemerocallis means “day beauty,” for each flower lasts only one day. Still, the overall plant bloom time can last several weeks. They grow over three feet tall (with the flower stalks) and grow best in part to full sunlight. They are hardy from zones 3 to 10.

Daylilies are not “true lilies” but resemble them. They grow worldwide, and each country believes they are native there. They are native to China, Japan, and North and South Korea. They quickly spread

worldwide because of their superior hardiness and adaptability to various growing conditions (not to mention their outstanding, simplistic beauty).

One daylily species, *Hemerocallis fulva*, is known as tiger-lily, orange-daylily, tawny-lily, and ditch-lily. It has a remarkable ability to grow in questionable habitats that many plants will find “scary.” For example, it grows abundantly on arid roadside banks and ditches. If it blooms here, it can do so in any dry, poor-soil, unmanageable garden.

Foolish people say it is a weed. However, many knowledgeable homeowners have adopted it as an easy-to-grow bedding display. This daylily is the quintessential flower of summer. Like most Daylilies, this species prefers to grow in full to partly sunny locations.

Today, there are billions (not really, but close to it — someday) of *Hemerocallis* varieties worldwide, each able to withstand any hot and dry location. Like any other plant, they would prefer better growing accommodations. Your nearby nursery or garden center will have a few colorful potted selections. Plenty of specialty nurseries offer bare-root plants if you enjoy ordering online.

Plant daylilies in well-drained, fertile soil from containers or bare-root clumps. They will take an entire growing season to develop. Still, each succeeding year will display its grandeur without your help by adapting to various environmental conditions, including severe drought.

Hibiscus

Hibiscus moscheutos



Every flowering plant family has a few flamboyant members that flaunt their flowers in size, color, and length of bloom. This group of plants is 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 for flower gardens. Do not confuse the colored tropical and semi-tropical hibiscus shrubs (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) offered in many garden centers with the following perennial species. Those tropical plants are sensitive to cold temperatures and must be stored indoors in winter.

As usual, with all members of this family, each hibiscus blossom will only last one day (like Daylily flowers), but you may not notice this, for

so many blossoms bloom each day. The petals unfurl in their full glory during the day but, by evening, fold up into a cone and later drop off. They can be 'messy' for the daily-spent blossoms drop onto the ground. Rake the soil once a week to keep the surrounding area clean.

Hibiscus are forgiving plants, but try to select the best-growing locations to highlight their outstanding beauty. Due to their height and spread, they are best planted at the back of a border, in the center of an island flower bed, or even as a hedge planting. They are also not bedding plants but an accent or a brag-about "look what I grew" plant.

Most varieties grow to five feet tall and almost as wide. If raised in full to partial sunlight and fertile, moist (but well-drained) soil, the plant will bloom most of the summer. I made a mistake (yes, I make the occasional major goof-up) by planting my plant in a hot and dry location, but it has suffered no ill effects. It had survived several droughty summers when I neglected to water it—for several weeks! It still managed to continue blooming.

There are several eye-catching varieties of hibiscus, but one that stands out is the '**Lord Baltimore**.' This 'old-fashioned' and hard-to-kill type is a must-grow-now plant if you have the garden space and want something show-stopping to brag about to your friends. Its bright, crimson-red flowers are sure to be a conversation starter.

Created in 1955 by hybridizing several related species, this hardy (zones 4 to 9) variety remains the best cultivar for any garden. It can reach eight feet tall (possibly more) and four feet wide.

The dinner-plate-sized (up to 12 inches) bright, crimson-red 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 plenty of seeds will be produced by fall. In some varieties, yes, but for this outstanding plant, the flowers are sterile and produce no seeds.

Please note that the tall stems will die back to the ground by winter. Cut and discard the dead stems and apply mulch to protect the below-ground growth crown. New growth will return during the late spring, ready to amaze you again with another summer-filled extravaganza of fabulous flowers—even when several dry days happen again.

Hosta

Hosta plantaginea (along with other species and hybrids)



Grown mainly for their versatile leaves – variegated or solid green – this plant may seem an unlikely drought survivor. Appearances can be deceiving for older established plants.

Hosta plants are the top choice for a low-maintenance shade garden. They thrive in various conditions, from zones 3 to 9, and can adapt to various soil types. Their pale blue-to-white flowers and beautiful variegated leaves add a touch of class to any garden.

Hostas prefer to grow in partial sunlight, with early morning sun being the best. Full shade is also suitable for these plants. While many

varieties can tolerate full sun for a limited time, their leaves, especially variegated ones, risk developing brown splotches. Therefore, it's essential to consider the placement of your plants to ensure their health and beauty.

Mature Hostas can survive long bouts of drought if grown in mostly shady locations. In most sunny areas, the leaves will begin to bleach out or turn white and then die and turn brown.

Ideally, planting Hostas in shadier, north-facing areas or a nearby woodland location in well-drained, fertile, but moist soil will make them look fabulous. If drought conditions can affect survival, so can exposure to constant wetness. Always ensure the ground never collects pools of water, which causes the roots to rot.

Today, there is a gazillion (well, close to it) Hosta species and their varieties for any partly shady garden. The trouble is, which plants will you grow? A trip to your nearest garden center will give you a clearer assortment of sizes, leaf variegation (or lack of), and differing flower characteristics.

Don't neglect mail-order and online nurseries; they always have rare and delectable offerings to brighten your, hopefully moist, shady acres. If the rainfall lean times occur, the mature plants with their extensive water-absorbent root system will wait out this stress. The occasional watering will always be attractively beneficial.

Iris – German Bearded and Siberian Iris

Iris germanica and sibirica



One of the benefits of blooming in late spring or early summer is admiring these hardy zones 3 to 9 perennials' remarkable display of fresh and vibrant flowers. When a drought arrives by midsummer, the blooming is over, and all that remains is their green leaves. The German Bearded Iris has sword-shaped leaf blades, while the Siberian Iris has massive clumps of tall grass-like blades. It's remarkable how they withstand extended dry spells for several weeks and still look unfazed by the unrelenting sun.

Many varieties of the Large Bearded Iris or German Iris (*Iris germanica*) are available to gardeners. Botanists call them bearded for the prominent fuzzy-fluffy yellow or orange hairs on the inner petals. They

grow from rhizomes, or horizontal, thickened stems. You plant them shallowly (horizontally with the ground), with one-half of the rhizome sticking out of the soil. You can do this from spring to early fall. Over time, new rhizomes branch outward and form compact clumps. One word of caution: try not to step on them, especially during the winter.

Check your local garden centers for the larger-blossomed, modern varieties. Online nurseries specializing in Iris offer more selections. Some varieties are listed as “re-bloomers” or can bloom again in mid to late summer. Hey, here’s a way to impress your “expert” gardening friends so you can choose the very best of flowers. Also, never turn down flowers that have the potential to grow and bloom all summer.



Siberian Iris (*Iris sibirica*) has many colorful varieties that do not have a thickened rhizome like the German Iris but concentrate more on leaf and root development. The numerous stem-producing leafy shoots and

massive intermingling of thickened, fibrous roots are the hallmarks of this gorgeous Iris.

Although named Siberian, this Iris is not from Siberia but from the Alps terrain of central Europe, across into Turkey, and then into southeastern areas of Russia. Why it was named “Siberian” is anyone’s guess, but it stuck.

The species and its many colorful varieties are exceptionally hardy. They prefer to grow in sunny to partly sunny locations with fertile, moist soil. However, they cannot tolerate constant wet ground.

You can find a few varieties in garden centers, but online nurseries will offer other rare types. One variation you must grow is **Caesar’s Brother**, with dark blue-purple flowers highlighted with vividly colorful lines called nectar guides.

All Siberian Iris make ideal plantings for any carefree border or landscape project. Periodic maintenance, such as cutting off spent flower stalks, helps prevent excessive seed production and makes the plants look better and healthier. By fall, shear back the grass-like leaves to about a foot tall.

Lavandula – Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia



Some garden plants, like the uniquely beautiful Lavender, thrive in areas that make us cringe with borderline panic. How in the world could they possibly live in such water-limited areas? Well, some naturally prefer such locations and not only survive but thrive. This historically beloved herb loves hot, dry, gravelly areas. Better yet, it thrives in its ancestral digs of the Mediterranean regions of harsh sunlight baking well-drained, limestone-enriched soil.

Don't pamper these plants with excessive fertilizer and regular watering; fewer applications will provide healthy, hardy, and happy plants for your garden. That meticulous and prissy care that other

garden flowers adore may actually weaken your lavender plants and vastly limit their hardiness.

Most varieties are hardy to zones 5 to 9, but too much wet winter soil will spell doom. They hate perpetually damp soil, and ice is even worse. They need unapologetically abundant, well-drained soil to grow, bloom, and flourish. Forget about adding them to your beds and borders; rock gardens stuck out in the blazing sun will suit them fine. Give them a dose of tough love. They can take it – and appreciate it.

Two excellent varieties to grow are **Grosso** and **Provence** Lavender. These types are essential in the perfume fields of the Grosso and Provence Valleys of France. The other name of the Grosso variety is “**Fat Spike**.” It is not a street gang nickname but refers to the large, plump flower spikes. The blossom color of both varieties is azure blue to violet, and the foliage is a silvery green.

You can find these variations and others in many garden centers and mail-order nurseries.

Monarda – Bee Balm

Monarda didyma



Related to the mint family, this very hardy perennial (zones 3 to 9) sports huge and colorful flower heads. It is native to the eastern half of North America and has familiar names such as Bee Balm and Oswego Tea. These bold-looking perennial plants have robust minty-orange leaves. Their large blossom heads also act as magnets to attract all the hummingbirds and butterflies in your neighborhood. Not all, but a good number of them.

These plants enjoy full sunlight and partial shade to grow and bloom well. Although these plants produce abundant leaves, they are surprisingly well adapted to occasional drought conditions. This will limit their blooming potential, but the plants can survive until the next

beneficial rainfall. If you water them, make sure to do so in the morning to allow the leaves to dry before the evening. This act provides a safety policy to prevent the formation of ugly powdery mildew fungal disease from becoming established.

There are many varieties, but **Jacob Cline** is one of the largest and most famous of the bright red types. The magnificent, large, red flowers are incredible to see and appear all summer. This variety also has excellent mildew disease resistance. This is an essential quality for Monardas (and other garden plants), which are susceptible to fungal problems. You do not want to spend quality time stomping around with a sprayer filled with fungicide.

When shopping at garden centers, always look for disease-resistant varieties.

Nepeta – Catmint

Nepeta x faassenii



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Contrary to popular belief, Nepeta—specifically, *Nepeta x faassenii* or Catmint—is not a high-maintenance perennial flower. It’s one of the best investments for any garden, especially for new gardeners. The newer *Nepeta x faassenii* hybrids, with their wide variety of outstanding blooms, require minimal care and bloom practically nonstop from mid-spring to mid-fall. When established, they also tolerate drought well.

Many landscapers recommend these plants for beginner gardeners. They instantly add vibrant color to newly established gardens. These

plants will thrive if you provide them with plenty of sunlight and well-drained soil.

Is lavender hardy enough to survive your hardiness zone? If not, then this perennial is hardy from zones 3 to 8. Although the gray-green leaves smell of mint instead of lavender, the abundance of flowers throughout the growing season is rewarding as a close substitute.

For flower color, *Nepeta x faassenii* offers a stunning array of blues. Several varieties are usually labeled lavender-blue, but some venture into the purple territory. For the best blue-flowered type for a bed or border, consult with your favorite nursery or garden center. You may also find some pink or white selections, adding a touch of variety and beauty to your garden.

What is there to choose from? Several varieties, in fact, but two highly recommended varieties include **Cat's Pajamas**, which provide a proliferation of bright indigo-blue blossoms all along the stems. You would think the weight of these flowers would cause the stems to flop to the ground, but they don't—they stand at attention throughout the summer. Another quality is that the calyxes (or modified sepals outside each blossom) are purple, extending the display later in the season.

Another sought-after variety is **Cat's Meow**, which flaunts gorgeous lavender-blue blossoms. Mature plants grow shorter and form expanding mounds that fill in pathways, limited border areas, and patio containers.

Because of the abundance of flowers, these plants attract many pollinators—bees, butterflies, and even hummingbirds, to partake in the great quantity of nectar. These plants attract every creature that flies or walks on two or four feet.

There is an unfounded fear by some gardeners that because of the common name of Catmint, these plants will attract the attention of the neighborhood feline population. Not particularly so, in several observations, but an occasional pussycat may be interested. A close relation to this species is *Nepeta cataria*, commonly named Catnip. That

species is the one cats have a more significant attraction to—for some feline reason.

For our purposes, we grow Catmint more for its flower production. The hybrids may have fertility problems producing seeds. Thus, they can make more blossoms all summer. Catnip blooms less but self-seeds aplenty and is more of a foliage plant. It's not particularly attractive to us, but the leaf scent is more to a kitty's liking.

Purr-haps, I have not been purr-suasive enough to extol the virtues of this purr-fect perennial. It would be a catastrophe if you did not include it in a prime location within a garden border. I recommend you go to your garden center or nursery and get your paws on this outstanding perennial. Don't waste any of your nine lives without growing and enjoying the above varieties.

I know; please stop all this caterwauling and get on with the next plant, which is...

Oenothera – Mexican Primrose; Yellow Evening Primrose

**Oenothera speciosa; Missourians; biennis;
longissima**



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

Native throughout North America, especially in the prairie grasslands and arid areas of Central and Southwestern USA, wild-growing Oenothera has an affinity to thrive in sunny, disturbed ground — such as abandoned fields, roadsides, drainage ditches, vacant lots, and other

less than ideal locations. They adapt well to periodic drought conditions and still bloom throughout the summer. They will grow and bloom exceptionally well in fertile garden soil — sometimes, too well. They all fatally falter in constant wet soil, so plant them in highly well-drained soil.

Some *Oenothera* species bloom only during the day, while others wait until the evening and overnight. These tall-growing wild 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 or two nights, but more follow each succeeding evening. Although not a contender for “best in show” of garden plants, a stalk of spent flowers loses its attractive appeal. Still, the individual blossoms are lovely.

The shorter-growing day bloomers provide a magnificent massive bloom of larger yellow, pink, or white blossoms that turn pink. Although they are less fragrant (or lack fragrant-ness) than the true evening bloomers, they provide brilliant color in beds and borders.

Garden centers may not offer potted plants, but seeds of the different species are available in wildflower catalogs. Most *Oenothera* species are considered perennial, while others are biennial and will flower the following year. Stagger sowing seeds for a couple of years so that some mature plants bloom yearly. Most species are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Opuntia – Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus

Opuntia humifusa



Well, it's about time we come to the ultimate drought-tolerant plant. Let's go further and declare it drought-resistant, like all other desert plant dwellers. It needs excessively well-drained, gravelly soil exposed to plenty of sun. Retaining standing water is a death sentence to it and any other cacti.

Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus has thorny "maximum succulent" leafy "pads" that need attention and care when considering placement in any garden. Let's face the obvious: this is not something you want where children and pets will play nearby. If you are like me, any plant (such as thistles and several types of roses) with excessively thorny and spiny stems and leaves is not on my list of must-grow additions to any

garden. I consider them weapons of fingertip destruction. Conversely, these spiny pads can develop very beautiful yellow to orange blossoms on the pads in the late spring and later form small reddish-orange fruit.

Should you grow this hardy cactus (zones 4 to 11) in your garden? Well, it is unique and beautiful (especially for many of us who are not living in a desert), but look at those vicious needles! I would think again if that impulse to grow it arises.

Pelargonium – Zonal Geraniums

Pelargonium hybridum



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Our familiar bedding and container annual geraniums have solid green leaves or a variegated or contrasting bronze band called zonal leaves. These small but bushy plants have semi-succulent stems topped with pink, violet, white, salmon-orange clusters and the ever-popular (and traditional favorite) bright red or scarlet blossoms.

For these plants to thrive, they need abundant sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. If you can provide these conditions, you can grow them in your garden. Their authentic charm, however, is revealed when they're grown in containers. Perhaps it's because container soil drains

excess water and dries faster than garden soil. Geraniums are the perfect choice for a low-maintenance garden.

They are succulent plants — having stems that retain water and can easily survive in drier soil is vital to having healthy, floriferous plants. This does not mean they behave like cacti; if the ground remains too dry, the plants may not recover and eventually die. The roots and main stem will rot if the soil stays too wet for a long time. Please check the dryness of the soil every few days, especially if it has not rained for a while. Give these plants “a good drink of water” and leave them alone for over a week during hot and dry conditions. Adding a mulch will also help delay watering for several days.

Too much watering will make the leaves yellow, limiting further growth and blooming. A case in point is a neighbor who plants scarlet geraniums around her house yearly. She complained her geranium leaves were turning yellow and failed to bloom. She blamed the nursery she purchased them for selling her “defective” plants — even though they were deep green and blooming when she bought them. Panicky, she pleaded for advice on what was happening to her plants. I advised her not to water these plants daily but to hold off for over a week and only re-water after a dry week. If it rains — good — but don’t give them additional water. The diagnosis was correct, and the prognosis eventually formed healthy, green, and ever-blooming plants all summer. The same treatment will happen for you.

Penstemon – Beardtongue

Penstemon heterophyllus and many other species



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Hardy from zone 3 and up, Penstemon has many species that appear almost like Foxglove flowers. Depending on the species, their flower spikes can reach up to three feet tall, covered with flared trumpet or tubular blossoms. Unlike the flowers clustered on a Foxglove spike, these flowers extend outward. The flower colors range from vibrant red to all shades of pink, blue, purple, white, and bicolors with contrasting veins or spots.

A key question about this plant is, what's with the Beardtongue nickname? It involves the shape and function of the flower. Each snapdragon-like blossom has a strangely developed, non-functional stamen called a staminode with hair-like extensions. This odd appearance resembles a small, fuzzy beard. I know this fact is not vital to our everyday welfare, but I hate dangling question marks about nickname origins.

These plants, though, require special care to thrive in your garden. First and foremost, they need exceptional soil drainage. Constant damp or sopping wet ground is the death knell for them. Some growers report raising them in pure sand or gravel does nothing to retard growth or blooming. Gee, if only all plants were as simple to grow like that! They prefer occasional watering like any plant, but not an overabundance.

Native primarily to the western areas of North America, Penstemon have extended their range elsewhere — as long as the growing conditions are tolerable. Most species and varieties have a limited bloom time that extends from spring to early summer.

Grow these plants in as much sunlight as possible and, of course, well-drained fertile soil. Unlike most garden flowers, avoid mulching these plants to prevent retaining excess soil moisture. A rock garden would be an ideal location to raise these plants.

What species or variety can you raise in your garden? In short, several Penstemon types are available to grow. Most will not be available in nurseries and garden centers, so your best option is to search for seeds and plants on specialized wildflower nursery websites and online catalogs.

You can grow these plants from seed sown in the fall (necessary for winter stratification) or purchase potted nursery plants.

Portulaca – Moss Rose

Portulaca grandiflora



Let's say your garden soil is sunbaked, sandy, gravelly, or chunky with stones. What could grow well in those less-than-ideal conditions that would not require constant irrigation and full-time maintenance? Well, many plants listed in this ebook will work, but here is one of the easily overlooked annuals that can thrive and bloom non-stop for you.

Native to South America, specifically Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina, Portulaca grows as a groundcover with small succulent leaves. Its absorbent nature is critical for survival in inhospitable, hot, dry places. This does not mean it can behave like cactus plants, for it needs occasional watering, but you can save on your water bill by growing these gorgeous plants.

They detest growing in heavy-clay-based soil, for clay can retain water too long and rot the roots and stems. If your soil is mainly clay, take the time (and, yes, some work) to add plenty of coarse sand. Come to think of it — this would be good when planting all the other flowers and vegetables in a garden. Respect your soil; it's the most essential thing concerning gardening!

Portulaca's common name explains everything about them — they look like moss. Still, the flowers appear as single to semi-double petal roses. Their colors range from white, red, rose pink, orange, yellow, and a slew of bicolors with streaks and stripes. They will bloom all summer and into the fall and self-seed plenty, so expect new plants each year.

After the last frost of spring, sprinkle seeds across the tilled soil and either water or let the rain settle them into place. Then, it is a waiting game to enjoy their beauty.

Each summer, I will drive by a home with a long driveway and a separate entrance and exit way. Each area contains flower beds showcasing these gorgeous plants. I never see if someone waters them, for the house is about a half-mile away. Who wants to carry water that distance? So, these plants are at the mercy of Mother Nature to give them a drink, but they thrive — each year!

Go wild and crazy by sowing these seeds in your rock garden, sidewalk edges, or other areas that prove difficult to grow.

Ptilotus – Pink Mulla Mulla; Lambs Tails; Pink Pussy Tails

Ptilotus exaltatus “Joey Improved”



Who could resist growing an Australian native flower named “Pink Mulla Mulla”? Well, I couldn’t, and I am glad I did. My sister also fell in love with it and wishes to grow it yearly.

There are several ways to describe the flower head of this unique annual. Including the above common names, you could describe it as Pink Cat Tails, Pink Spruce Trees, Pink Pinecones, or, as my sister crudely remarked (jokingly), Pink Toilet Brushes. Older gardeners may also call it Pink Bottle-Brushes. Does anyone use this tool anymore?

Anyway, when viewed up close, those eye-catching, if not unbelievable, four-inch-long flower heads are composed of several tiny tubular flowers with vivid neon-pink ends. They separate each other with whitish woolly, fuzzy, fluffy, or spiderweb-ish fibers. The cottony effect looks gray or pale purple in bright sunlight punctuated with laser-like pink dots. The green leaves eventually form reddish stems topped with those conical, if not comical, flower heads.

I hope I have adequately described this description. If not, zoom in on the above photo. Even the honeybees and smaller bumblebees were confused about these flowers. They eventually liked them, for they constantly sipped the nectar all summer and into the fall.

This plant grows in central Australia's hot and arid regions and is surprisingly related to Celosia plants. Although it grows as a perennial there, it is more of an annual for most gardens elsewhere.

The plants need full sunlight to grow and bloom well for all container and bedding purposes, and the soil must be exceptionally well-drained. The plants thrive in occasional forgetfulness in watering but will perish in constantly watered soil. As for fertilization, incorporate some time-released granules into the ground.

Look for the variety called "**Joey Improved.**" This plant is very low-maintenance, for you do not have to trim back any side shoots or spent flowers; they keep growing from the top of each cone-shaped flower head while the bottom actually "spent" blossoms blend in with all the other clusters of flowers. Allow the flower heads to keep growing and, hopefully, form seeds.

As a floral newcomer to most gardeners (when writing this ebook), the seeds are expensive and have a low germination rate. Breeders are currently working on improving those two problems.

This annual is perfect for growing if you wish to impress the know-it-all garden club members or competitive neighbors. They won't know how to react to these unusual flowers and will be persistent in questioning

you about them. Just smile and keep them curious. You have finally earned some praise and respect.

Rosa – Landscape Roses

Rosa species and hybrids



Although the primary focus of this ebook is on long-blooming and drought-tolerant herbaceous garden plants, let's not forget about our popular woody shrubs and trees. Once fully mature (usually after three years from planting), they can easily survive occasional drought conditions with limited watering. Our ever-popular long-blooming shrub roses are an excellent example of thriving and blooming while enduring a typically hot, dry summer.

Many outstanding shrub and climbing roses are available in garden centers and online rose nurseries. I can't even try to list them here. My best advice is to visit your favorite garden nurseries and find ones best

suited for growing in your hardiness zone area. Also, try to concentrate on choosing fragrant varieties.

Unlike their older counterparts, which bloom for a few weeks in late spring or early summer, modern roses delight us all summer. They show great potential in enduring periodic negligence, particularly in drought conditions. The **Knock Out® Roses**, for instance, are an excellent varietal series that requires minimal attention yet blooms profusely.

Shrub roses are accurately advertised as being the most floriferous, longest-blooming, and exceptionally hardy. Other perks include better disease and insect pest resistance, attractive color selections, and nonstop blooming.

You may have seen (without realizing) these roses planted in concrete enclosed flowerbeds outside business locations, including fast-food restaurants, gas stations, and parking lot “beautification” areas (of all things). Even if a natural drought is not happening, these locations do not prioritize regular watering regimes, and the soil is subjected to intense heat during the summer. I would be surprised if anyone bothers to water these roses. Still, they appear to thrive and bloom without human help and solely rely on Mama Nature’s gift of rainwater.

All roses, including the **Knock Out®** varieties, appreciate a sunny, well-drained, fertile soil location in beds or borders. Adding mulch will help provide additional fertility, water retention, and root protection over the winter.

Rudbeckia – Black-Eyed Susan

Rudbeckia fulgida and Rudbeckia hirta



You have probably seen these bright, three-inch diameter, yellow or orange daisies blooming in parks, public gardens, and your neighbor's flower beds or borders. "Those flowers are beautiful," you thought but gave no further attention until now. You must include these annual and perennial plants for a carefree, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant flower garden.

Commonly called "Black-Eyed Susan," this hardy (zones 4 to 9) perennial is famous for being relatively maintenance-free and long-blooming throughout the summer. Breed from wild stock of North American prairie heritage, these plants can tolerate heat, dry soil conditions, and 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; they seem to grow best (and be healthier) if not over-fertilized.

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

One of the best and most extensively grown varieties available is **Goldsturm**. It has brilliant yellow petals with a dark brown to black central cone—the “black eye.” It grows to over two feet tall and is bushy, producing boatloads of daisies all 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 and leave the leafy stems to remain. While you are at it, do the same with other tired-looking perennials to make them look “fresher.”

Gardeners can also choose less-hardy (zone 8) or annual Rudbeckia free-flowering varieties. Rudbeckia hirta has gorgeous, mixed-color orange, red, and yellow flowers. It is also a carefree, water-saving addition to a bed or border.

Many garden centers will offer these plants and several other spectacular varieties.

Salvia – Russian Sage

Salvia yangii (formally *Perovskia atriplicifolia*)



Botanists occasionally change the Latin names of plants. In 2017, it was time to review whether the popular Russian Sage was or wasn't a genuine member of the genus *Salvia*. Sometimes, I wonder if fistfights occur when disagreements over binomial nomenclature opinions arise.

Well, it is now determined that this plant is an official, true *Salvia* sage. Its new Latin name is now *Salvia yangii*. Whew! Now, we can all breathe a sigh of relief. One less world problem solved. In the meantime, no one uses this new name and prefers to use the old (and reliable) common name of Russian Sage. After all, most of us do not go chit-chatting about Latin names.

Now that we have concluded this long and tedious introduction, we can focus on what makes this plant desirable for any garden. One quality is its production of (what else?) blue to purple salvia flowers loaded around long stems. It has the appearance of an abundance of tall, blooming lavender. If you have difficulty growing or keeping lavender alive, this plant can earn itself as a reasonable, colorful substitution. While lavender smells of lavender, this plant has the aroma of sage when handled. It is reliably hardy from zones 4 to 9 and needs the same growing environment as lavender.

Plant Russian Sage in well-drained soil and plenty of sunlight for best growth, bloom, and survivability. Constant wet soil spells doom for this plant, so incorporate plenty of sand or gravel. Most well-grown plants can reach upward to over four feet but are equally bushy, blooming mainly from midsummer until late fall. The whole plant becomes semi-woody as it ages, but trimming back last year's growth in the early spring stimulates fresh gray-green growth and better blooming.

For those interested in adding the Russian Sage to their garden, several cultivars or varieties are available in garden centers or online nurseries. Purchasing these varieties is often a more reliable option than growing the plant from seed. These cultivated varieties offer enhanced blue/purple coloration, increased flower production, and a more manageable growth size. Before purchasing your ideal blue variety, determine the size of your garden plot to withstand a fully grown plant. It's best to plant most types alone in a small bed or on a border's middle or outer edge, ensuring they don't overshadow smaller flowering plants.

Possible varieties include '**Blue Haze**,' which has pale blue flowers. In contrast, '**Filigran**' has a smaller size and brighter blue blossoms. '**Little Spire**' is petite or compact, growing to about two feet tall and wide with lavender-blue flowers. There are reports it can become invasive because of uncontrollable underground shoots plus excessive seed distribution. This would be fine for more out-of-the-way beds or confined borders where nothing else grows well.

Other types are available based on size and coloration in garden centers and online nursery catalogs. To narrow the list to one popular variety, consider the *2020 Proven Winners National Perennial of the Year*® award winner, **Denim 'n Lace**. It sounds like a silly TV comedy series of mismatched police detective partners: A youthful, muscular, tough guy and a wise, elderly lady with a Victorian-like demeanor who assists in solving crimes. (I know, it's not a realistic scenario, but that's standard strange fare on television nowadays.)

Anyway, the color of the flowers is self-explanatory, but the lacy part refers to its highly curated gray-green leaves. The flowers are long-lasting throughout the summer and into the fall. The amethyst-colored bracts or calyxes holding each flower help enhance the beautiful overall coloration.

Denim 'n Lace is gaining popularity for its compact height, strong stems that don't flop to the ground, withstand poor soil fertility, drought resistance, low maintenance, and superb blue color. You can even plant it into large containers for eye-catching patio or deck displays. No wonder it is an award-winning plant! Look for it in most garden centers or online.

Sedum – Stonecrop

Sedum spectabile; Sedum ternatum or Sedum acre



Some perennials, like Sedum, often go unnoticed in gardening, yet they possess unique qualities that make them stand out. These plants are among the most carefree in gardens and landscapes, thriving and multiplying with minimal intervention. They may not demand much, but they deserve some attention and admiration. After all, who doesn't?

One reason for this apathy is that people consider them boring because they lack vibrant flowers or bloom in the fall. This is a poor excuse, for all Sedum species and varieties have excellent growth qualities in all gardens. They tolerate full sun and dry soil with succulent leaves, so

you do not have to water often. This is ideal when planting in sandy or gravelly soil exposed to dry locations.

There is an old joke about why they have the common name of “stonecrop.” The punchline is they live longer and need less care than stones and rocks. (Insert drum rimshot and cymbal “ba-dum-ching” sound here.) There is only one precaution to remember when growing all Sedum: never plant them in consistently moist or wet soil, for the stems will rot.

The succulent leaves can exhibit beautiful colors, including variegations. Most varieties display shades of dark purple, reddish-orange (or a dull copper,) golden yellow, and green blended with white or yellow. Depending on the species and type, a plant will have clusters of star-shaped rose-pink, white or yellow flowers.

Now, let’s delve into the exciting aspect of choosing the right type of Sedum for your garden. The beauty of these plants lies in their versatility, allowing you to display them in various ways that suit your unique gardening style.

There are two classifications of Sedum plants. You can choose upright growth or relaxed or sprawling varieties. The upright growers (such as Sedum spectabile ‘Autumn Delight’) have larger succulent leaves on one to three-foot stems.



In contrast, as expected, the creeping or groundcover types (such as *Sedum ternatum* or *Sedum acre* – shown above) typically have small leaves that can cover pathways or be used as under-planting in rock gardens.

The star-shaped flowers of the tall growers appear as large, separate clusters. At the same time, the groundcovers blanket themselves with tiny blossoms.

The time of blooming is also different. Like **Autumn Joy**, the upright varieties bloom spectacularly in the late summer through the fall. In contrast, the lax-growers typically bloom from spring to early summer, but their flowers are less showy. The main attraction of these groundcovers is their colorful leaves.

One benefit of these succulent plants is you can quickly propagate them. The groundcovers root along the ground where the stems touch the soil. You can cut the upright grower's stems and insert them into the

soil at any similar location. Here, they will quickly form new roots. How easy is that? You can have Sedum growing all over the garden!

Silphium – Compass Plant or Rosinweed

Silphium laciniatum



You don't need GPS access to navigate your garden with this impressive perennial native to the vast prairies of North America. The coarse-textured, six—to nine-foot-tall stems, and bright yellow, daisy-like flowers resemble sunflowers but are 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 the sticky sap called resin. When the resin began to dry, they would chew 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 and periodic drought conditions. Ensure the soil is well-drained; 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 plants can produce plenty of flowers. Place these giant plants in the rear of your border to avoid shade or overtaking 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.

In his book, *A Sand County Almanac*, the great American conservationist, environmentalist, and author Aldo Leopold wrote about the loss of the prairie fauna and flora. One passage describes him finding a solitary Compass Plant 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 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.”

This plant is not offered for sale in any garden center. You may discover it in wildflower nurseries or 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



Some annoying, unattractive weeds cover old farm fields and meadows. Some species can become troublesome and invasive. Then there are some beautiful “weeds” you do not think of as 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.

Goldenrod has long been popular in Europe as a valued garden plant, but the opposite is true for gardeners in North America. One primary reason is there are more than one or two species but nearly 140 species and varieties. It’s challenging to get excited about these flowers when

they bloom simultaneously with hay-fever-causing Ragweed (*Ambrosia psilostachya*).

People falsely believe Goldenrod causes 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 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 adding this attractive perennial to their gardens. Suppose you prefer something other than the stately seven-foot-tall-plus species. There are now new dwarf varieties or hybrids available you can plant for late summer enjoyment.

All tall and short plants are hardy from zones 3 to 9 and prefer to grow in full sun and fertile soil. Although these plants prefer to grow in regularly moist soil, they can tolerate dry soil for a lengthy time without limiting their blooming.

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

Stachys – Lamb’s Ears

Stachys byzantina



Considered one of the easiest perennials to grow, Stachys is also one of the more enjoyable. The reason is with those thick, snow-white felted leaves that children (and us Peter Pan-ish adults) enjoy touching. You can't go wrong in adding this plant to a garden for lovers of fuzzy-wuzzy, wooly, silvery-white leafed perennials or baby sheep (who doesn't?). One other plant that comes to mind for touchy-feely pleasure is the "pussy-willow" catkins of Salix trees.

Primarily grown as an edging plant, you can also transform it into a groundcover if you have enough plants. Over the growing season, a single plant can spread to four feet wide. Since it is very hardy (from zones 4-9), each succeeding year will make it spread outward even

more. Some growers feel it can become invasive, but regular pruning of out-of-bounds creeping plants should be fine.

One of its best uses is planting this perennial in problematic areas where other plants cannot grow well. It tolerates many soil types but prefers well-drained and sunny locations. This fact alone demonstrates that it can be drought-tolerant for an extended time. One problem—if not fatalistic—is an area with constant wet soil.

One other benefit of adding this plant to any perennial garden is that it repels deer. Deer hates the taste and feel of the fuzzy leaves in their mouths. One bite, and they immediately decide to graze on those yummy Hosta plants next door.

Lamb's Ears produce tall, soft-purple-pink flower spikes in the summer and are beautiful cut flowers since they last a long time in arrangements.

Stokesia – Stokes Aster

Stokesia laevis



While walking among the display beds at my favorite arboretum garden, I always encounter several plants of this beautiful blue-purple perennial flower. At first, I never knew what it was (the identification tags of flowers always disappear). The petals were frilly when fully extended but looked like an Aster. Later, I discovered it was a Stokesia plant. Here is a prime example of how appearances can be deceiving. The plant has beautiful four-inch, blue daisy-like flowers for most of the summer.

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. From zones 5 to 10, it grows well in full to partial sunlight in many soil types but requires well-drained conditions, especially in the winter. Constantly wet or ice-covered soil will kill it, so ensure it is porous.

For someone who loves to discover new plants to grow in a garden, it was surprising that I had never encountered this plant before—especially in nurseries and garden centers. Search for and grow the **Peachie's Pick** variety if you haven't discovered it. 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 different (and better) from all other seed-grown plants in her garden. It displays smaller plants (two feet tall) with much more prominent, upright-facing, deeper blue flowers. The plant's icing on the cake is the most valuable trait: The flowers are sterile. Wild-grown plants self-seed with abandon, but Peachie's plant does not. This is ideal because it saves valuable energy, produces longer blooms, and offers extra hardiness.

Another variety is **Honeysong Purple**, which has deeper blue-purple flowers with shorter 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 to grow several in your garden.

Tithonia – Mexican Sunflower

Tithonia rotundifolia



Tithonia is native to Mexico and grows wild in Central America. This striking, bushy annual plant, with its regal nickname of the “Gold Flower of the Incas,” is a sight to behold. It typically reaches an average height of five feet but can soar even higher under the right conditions. Regardless of its height, the plant bursts with vibrant, orange-red to pure yellow daisy-like flowers, creating a stunning display from midsummer to fall.

As a cousin of the sunflower, Tithonia thrives in full sunlight and can handle less fertile, drier soil. It’s one of the most drought-tolerant tall-growing flowers you can cultivate in your garden, making it a low-maintenance addition. Even if you’re away for an extended period, you

can rest assured that your Tithonia will be fine without frequent watering.

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 simple to insert into well-drained soil.

This bushy plant is perfect for children's gardens 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 around this plant. It would be an ideal way to spend a delightful late summer day!

Tradescantia – Spiderwort

Tradescantia virginiana and *Tradescantia ohiensis*



I must give breeders of new flowers two thumbs up for developing beautiful hybrid varieties of this eastern North American perennial. Hardy from zones 4 to 9, the wild plants have long, blade-like dark green leaves with small (around one inch) three-petaled blue flowers with bright yellow stamens. If you have never encountered these flowers, you may think they were small Iris—but they are not.

These flowers bloom in clusters called umbels. A few clusters bloom each day, and each one lasts one day—like daylily blossoms. Over time,

a three-foot-tall group of plants can display hundreds of these small blossoms from mid-spring to midsummer.

One surprising feature of these flowers is when they fade. The petals lose their color and become translucent, allowing light to pass through them. This feature created another nickname, "Widow's Tears," for weeping over the death of the flower. The plants can grow in full sun, but the intense light and hot temperatures will make the flowers fade quickly, causing the widows to sob themselves silly. No, these plants prefer part to full shade and can tolerate extended periods of dry soil. While visiting a botanical garden, I saw a bed of these plants thriving and blooming in dense shade in drought-cracked earth.

The wild plants are not exciting, but the new hybrid varieties are gorgeous. If you need a prime example of what breeders have achieved in creating a colorful variety, please grow **Sweet Kate** (shown above). This fascinating and pleasantly gaudy variety has cobalt blue flowers nestled among bright yellow leaves. It is a stunning beauty for any shade garden!

Garden centers should (and I demand they should) have this variety and others available for you to grow in your garden. These newer hybrids will adapt to more sunlight with constant moist soil. If breeders could make these plants keep their beautiful flowers longer than a day, they would be ideal. We may expect too much from certain plants and should enjoy them as they are.

We need to tie up one loose end. What does Spiderwort mean? One theory is it gets its name from the sticky sap that oozes from a stem when broken or cut. When this sap air-dries, it transforms into a whitish, thread-like substance. People thought spiders drank this sap to make their silk for spinning webs.

Theory number two is that this sap helped heal spider bites. Did you get bit by a large vicious spider? Cut a stem and apply the juice to the wound to neutralize the venom and treat the skin. Since the root word is "wort," a plant used for medical use, I will vote for this theory.

Tulipa – Tulip

Tulipa sylvestris; turkestanica and other species



We should recognize an essential group of garden plants. They are our fall and spring blooming bulbs. These bulbs have the advantage of blooming when the growing conditions are aligned perfectly by growing and blooming when enough soil moisture is adequate in springtime or fall.

Many, like tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, and lilies, along with others, when a summer drought event happens, gradually suspend absorbing sunlight to “fatten” their bulbs and begin to go dormant. Nestled deep in the dry earth, these bulbs undergo dormancy and wait until a new growth and bloom cycle starts again in the new year. They can wait out the summer arid times unphased.

Among these bulbs, tulips stand out for their adaptability to different soil conditions. They thrive in soil with a more open texture, such as sand and gravel. Unlike many other plants, tulips prefer to be more dry than moist during their dormancy, making them a perfect fit for neglected, sandy, gravelly, or desolately parched soil conditions.

Tulips originated in the summer blistering hot (and winter's extremely cold), arid, sandy/gravelly Middle Eastern regions. If transplanted to Mars, I am sure they would also thrive there.

Meanwhile, here on Earth, the south-facing border of my house is not ideal for many plantings. It is subjected to constant summer sun, and the soil is, embarrassingly, almost like a gravelly sponge. It was not originally like this, but I failed to renourish it with compost over time. I planted red and yellow **Darwin Tulips** there and in a few well-tended fertile beds. The bulbs in these fertile, well-tended beds eventually died; fewer blooms occurred each year until nothing sprouted one spring. However, the bulbs in this derelict border have shown remarkable resilience. Larger clusters of these tulips bloom each spring and, by early summer, begin dormancy.

Tulips not only survive but thrive on neglect and dry soil conditions. If you have such a neglected, sandy, gravelly, or desolately parched plot of earth, plant plenty of wild or hybrid tulips this fall. By spring, you will be amazed at the transformation of lifelessness to abundant, colorful petals. Don't fuss with them. Leave them be. They will appreciate your neglect and reward you with years of springtime enjoyment.

Yucca – Adam’s Needle or Spanish Bayonet

Yucca filamentosa; aloifolia and other species



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Here is a plant that may confuse 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. Packed with thick-petaled, nodding bell-shaped, white or cream-colored blossoms, this stalk 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 about growing this plant. I will also include a couple of yawns for unbridled emphasis.

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

You must position these plants in plenty of sunlight and soil with exceptional drainage. These plants can easily tolerate drought-induced 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 complain that their Yucca plants never bloom. The best advice is to have patience. They will eventually bloom, but the fine print is that it may take a few years.

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 from a plant. You will understand why it waited so long to bloom once you see a mature Yucca with its massive flowering inflorescence.

Conclusion

When I arrive at any of the conclusion sections of my ebooks, I fear that I have neglected, forgotten, or overlooked a plant that, in hindsight, should have been included. This ebook is no exception. My apologies if I overlooked something blatantly obvious.

The above listing of flowering plants is only a sample of what can be grown to survive periodic drought conditions. Several shrubs and trees, when mature, will adapt to these dry times more efficiently than annuals and some perennials.

If you are a home gardener or farmer, you may only understand the profound relief and joyful satisfaction of seeing continuous rainfall drench an arid landscape. This summer (of this publication date), my area had not had a soaking rain for over a month. A few earlier mediocre raindrops fell but soon evaporated, leaving a saturating tropical humidity that eventually merged into sweat. Ugh. I know I could not survive in the tropics. Watering the flower and vegetable gardens and container plants became an early morning, every-other-day routine. By midday, the temperatures would soar to either side of 90 degrees F. The Saharan-mimicking sun was unrelenting, with the blue sky occasionally dotted by curdled clouds that formed isolated small storms elsewhere. Each day was a repeated similar experience. The only plants that grew well were the weeds. The idea of weeding was constantly outvoted by the overwhelming majority of lazy thoughts, such as *"Oh, why bother!"* or *"It's too damn hot."* Constant hot, dry weather makes gardening a procrastination activity, moving the *"I'll do it tomorrow"* excuse up each successive sultry day.

Planting the garden flowers described in this publication is only one way to ease that drought concern. There are other important methods to alleviate your worry and labor during those dry days (and extended weeks) of summer. The following suggestions will apply to everyone, even if you do not suffer from periodic drought conditions. They aid in conserving water, easing your workload, and allowing you more free

time to do other activities. The main advantage for your garden plants is better growth and blooming. Consider implementing the following activities for a better summer experience:

- You need to prioritize which plants need more watering attention during a drought. More expensive plantings, such as newly planted or immature shrubs and trees, should be at the top of your regular watering regime. Next should be your perennial plants, and lastly, annuals, for they are the least expensive and can be easily replaced.
- Mature lawns should not be watered and be allowed to go dormant. Yes, a brown, “crunchy” lawn is not aesthetically pleasing, but regular lawn grass is adapted to undergo dormancy and will regrow when regular rainfall returns. Watering your lawn uses too much water and “ups” your usage bill. Try not to establish a new lawn in the summer. Wait until fall when regular rainfall returns.
- Apply mulch to your flower and vegetable gardens. The mulch can be made of compost, woodchips, shredded bark, pea-sized gravel, or even a water-permeable inorganic tarp to cover the ground. Remember, mulch does three essential processes. It slowly releases nutrients into the ground while decomposing percolates water into the soil and retains it there. It also helps prevent or significantly lessen the development of weeds. These benefits should reassure you that your gardening practices are on the right track. If your garden is too large or material costs prohibit you from applying a mulch, thoroughly soak the soil each week when watering the beds or borders. A good soaking incorporates water deeper into the ground for better downward root development. A quick watering (or a short rainfall event) applies only to the topmost areas of the soil, which will quickly dry out during the day. A plant’s roots will only be limited to this harsh region, which limits growth and bloom. Short waterings daily use more water than one good once-a-week soaking of the soil during a drought.

- Apply watering on weekend mornings with a “soaker hose” rather than an overhead sprinkler. Here, you get water directly to the ground and do not add to instant evaporation. Also, morning watering will allow you more time to do it, and if water is splashed on the leaves or flowers, they will dry off during the day. This prevents fungus diseases from developing. Evening watering can increase the chance of this happening to your plants.
- This “good soaking” will also apply to mulched gardens. In this case, you may not have to perform a weekly watering regimen but instead apply two weeks later, depending on whether you receive substantial rainfall during this interval.

When you receive an excellent soaking rainfall (and you will innately sense it), jump for joy, sing and dance, and make an utter happy fool of yourself. Who cares what the neighbors think? Water provides life and is a great experience, especially when it offers plentiful fruit and gorgeous flowers. Your successful garden is a testament to your hard work and dedication; you should feel proud of your achievements.

Thank You for reading this ebook

I hope this publication has enlightened you about the many types of flowering plants that can adapt to the occasional dry spells that appear to be increasing in many locations. They and others not listed (such as trees and shrubs) can survive with limited watering when mature.

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.