



Pretty BIG Bloomers

Huge Garden Flowers

G. Edwin Varner

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PRETTY BIG BLOOMERS: HUGE GARDEN FLOWERS

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This PDF publication highlights those garden plants that reliably bloom with super-sized flowers. Through hybridization, they have been selected for developing sizable blossoms.

So, what criterion is used to select the following flowers, aside from the obvious observation of being bigger? For this ebook, I have selected those plants that display flowers with palm or hand-size diameters. For a few eye-opening others, they unfurl amazing-dinner-plate-sized blossoms. All the following plants will offer you plenty of colorful and talk-about enjoyment.

Please note: I have copied pertinent information from my previous ebooks, corrected known mistakes, including minor grammatical and spelling errors, and added new material to this ebook.

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

Introduction

Most garden plants evolutionarily adjust the size of their flowers to match the size of their pollinators — or vice versa. The more small flowers are made and pollinated, the more seeds of the next generation are produced. This is a win-win situation for the plants and pollinating insects. But what's with the following extravagant petal-enhanced forms described in this eBook? After all, we don't see bees and butterflies the size of our hands or dinner plates, fortunately.

Very large flowers are generally not naturally occurring, except for a few tropical plants. It is more economical for a plant to make many smaller flowers so they can be easily pollinated and more seeds can develop. We, on the other hand, prefer these big, colorful blossoms. That "*bigger is always better*" philosophy may satisfy our floral esthetics, but not so much for Mother Nature. She prefers many smaller flowers and not fewer larger ones.

Listed and described below are some of those "bigger and better" garden flowers that breeders have developed over the years. Most, if not all, of them originally began as genetically small-blossomed plants, but selections for slightly larger flowers in each generation were saved and repeatedly hybridized, eventually leading to their great size seen today.

It is amazing to see the difference in flower size between them and the species size characteristics. Any small-flowered plant, over time, through many generations, meticulous selections, and careful breeding, will eventually create a huge-flowered version. Think of all those possibilities!

Is developing these huge blossoms a bad thing? Definitely not. They add a delightful jolt of amazement to flower gardening when you grow and later view those enlarged, colorful petals.

The plants listed below showcase their relatively large flowers, including those of the Daisy or Aster family, and others, which, although

composed of several small “true” flowers, are grouped to form a large flowerhead. The remaining plants really do have amazing, humongous individual blossoms.

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

Allium — Flowering Onion

Allium aflatunense



Please think of this bulb as a giant blooming version of our vegetable garden onion. Depending on the variety, the sturdy flower stalk (botanically called the inflorescence) grows from under 2 feet to nearly 3 feet tall. It forms an enormous ball (also referred to as an orb or globe for greater discretionary effect) of gorgeous purple, white, or creamy-lavender star-shaped florets. For additional “functionality,” you can also cut the flower stalk for indoor displays.

You will obviously notice the onion smell if you handle any part of this plant. This is not a bad thing, for this smell (and taste) repels squirrels, chipmunks, rabbits, and, especially, deer.

Blooming lasts, weather permitting, up to an entire month. Afterward, the flower head slowly dries (along with the enclosed black seeds), which still looks attractive in your garden.

Plant these spring-blooming bulbs in the fall and in a sunny to partially sunny location with well-drained soil. Different species and varieties are available depending on flower color and stalk size. Look for the popular *Allium aflatunense* '**Purple Sensation**' with large, stunning purple globes packed with several small flowers. Each sphere looks like a blue planet suspended in your garden. Make sure to plant several this fall to get the “fully stunning” effect of color and floral size.

Aristolochia — Dutchman's Vine; Calico Vine

Aristolochia gigantea; littoralis or Aristolochia elegans



Most species of this vine originate in tropical areas of Central and South America. Once discovered by European explorers (and exploiters), these vines spread elsewhere in warmer regions of the world. Later, hybridization would create new, even weirder and more exotic forms, including this particularly huge type.

There are hundreds of species scattered worldwide, but they all have a similar flower structure. They differ in size and color, but they resemble meerschaum pipes. "What's that?" you may ask. They are large smoking

pipes, once famous in the Netherlands and throughout Europe. Think of the pipe Sherlock Holmes is credited with using in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories.

Depending on the species, the flowers vary from small, yellowish-green to exceptionally large, deep brown-purple with white or yellowish veins. The petal colors resemble a slab of meat left out in the scorching sun. The blossom also has a noticeable "rotten meat" or carrion-corpse aroma. Guess what pollinates these flowers? Flies. This vine fools them into thinking they are about to enjoy a rotten meat feast and a great place to lay their eggs. Sorry, flies, it will not happen.

These are great vines to grow and to admire in any garden. Don't worry about my description of rotting meat and flies. You will notice none of this — unless you stick your nose deep inside the flowers.

Our imagination of the flower's appearance can go further. The old Latin name of this vine roughly translates to "the best way to have childbirth." Wait one minute. Weird-looking smoking pipes and birthing babies? Yes, go figure!

The flower's appearance somewhat resembles a human fetus in a womb. Ancient people would extract juices from these flowers to help deliver babies pain-free. If you want to become a do-it-yourself midwife, don't try this method. The reason is that the fluid and extracts are toxic. How mothers and babies lived after being administered this "brew" is mind-boggling.

Hardy from zones 9 and above, they grow best in full to partial sunlight, fertile, moist, and well-drained soils. Under the best conditions, they can grow to well over 20 feet tall. Even in temperate areas of the world, gardeners can grow them as annuals with good growth and plenty of blossoms. Flowering continues for most of the summer until the coolness of fall.

Like many other vines, this plant can cover trellises, fences, arbors, posts, and any other tall supporting structure. They can grow well in containers (with support) and reach about 8 feet tall. The dark green

leaves are heart-shaped and display the annoying habit of hiding the flowers—part of the time, at least.

Begonia

Begonia tuberosa hybrida



Mother Nature appears to have a few favorite flowers. She has outdone herself in creating many types of plants, but Begonias are a prime example of her endearment, with over 1,300 species. Most of these species are tropical or semi-tropical but grow well in partly shaded flower beds or containers.

Most begonias have thick, fleshy stems — an adaptation to store water when the soil becomes too dry. They grow best in well-drained soil that periodically dries. If exposed to wet soil, the stems and tubers will rot, killing the plant. Some begonias develop tubers or thickened rhizomes (stems) that serve as energy-storage structures to survive dry seasons in the tropics, but they die when exposed to freezing conditions.

Regardless of type, size, or shape, their popularity stems from their showy, colorful leaves and flowers. Flowers can range from simple, single-petaled blossoms to flamboyant, billowy, large-petaled ones. Their leaves can be dark green to bronze with random contrasting patterns.

Most Begonias can be planted in partly sunny to shady locations. Yes, they can tolerate full sunlight, but depending on the variety or species, this may cause flower discoloration and excessive leaf dryness. Dappled sunlight or partial shade, and well-drained, fertile soil provide excellent growing conditions for these plants in bedding or in any container.

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

They can produce large, colorful, flamboyant “fluffy” flowers that resemble roses. These are the male blossoms, while the female flowers have fewer petals.

These plants are sensitive to wet soil, as their tubers and stems can rot if grown in poorly drained, compacted soil. They tolerate full sunlight but are susceptible to heat damage, which can damage blossoms and leaves.

Deep shade limits blooming and can make stems and leaves too floppy and succulent, creating prime conditions for fungal and other diseases. So, the best “Goldilocks condition” is to grow these plants in partly sunny or dappled-shady areas and in well-drained soil.

All garden centers offer these Begonias each spring. A tried-and-true variety to purchase is the “**NonStop**” colorful selections, for they can bloom non-stop all summer and into the fall if — seriously, IF — you take the time to care for them adequately.

Brugmansia — Angels' Trumpets

Brugmansia suaveolens



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Buddleia — Butterfly Bush

Buddleia davidii



With the common name of this plant, what more do we need to know? We all love the flowers that make butterflies happy. For years, gardeners have observed our large-winged insects gravitate to the colorful, highly fragrant flower spikes. They will feverishly flutter about, inserting their coiled proboscis into the tiny florets.

Many varieties with long-spiked flowers can reach lengths of well over 8 inches! They usually don't tower above the foliage; they grow more horizontally. No matter. Their flowers come in vivid colors ranging from white to reddish-orange, as well as vivid pink and orange. The most popular is purple to vibrant blue. Don't bother growing these shrubs from seed — it takes too long to develop into a blooming-sized plant.

Regardless of their color, all varieties share a common trait — a profusion of tiny florets that burst into bloom from midsummer to fall. These flower spikes emit a delightful fragrance, a blend of citrus, honey, and pine. However, your nose might detect a different scent.

Buddleia plants are hardy in zones 5 to 10 and thrive in full sun and rich soil. They are disease and insect-free but sensitive to extreme cold. The top growth may die back in northern climates after winter, but it will quickly regrow from underground shoots in early summer. Avoid over-fertilizing the soil to improve winter cold tolerance.

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum x morifolium



The Orient had cultivated chrysanthemums (aka “mums”) long before they grew in English gardens, sometime around 1795. They were flowers for the ruling class only. Chinese and Japanese people believe chrysanthemums symbolize the sun, perfection, and a healthy, prosperous, long life.

The Japanese emperors even sat on thrones adorned with chrysanthemums. A long life to their royal rear ends, I would guess. The rulers forbid the lower-class poor people to grow them in their gardens under the penalty of death. Italians also consider chrysanthemums associated with mortality or with bad luck. I think not. Mafia, yes, but mums — never!

Not only are they glowing with beautiful colors, but some varieties also have a fragrance. The scent is herbal-pungent but refreshing! Plant them in the spring, and you have just guaranteed yourself a colorful fall. They are also excellent for containers and boatloads of cut flowers.

For large-flowered types, I recommend growing varieties labeled '**Football Mums**'. Football, in this case, refers to American football. These massive-sized mums provide plenty of rich autumnal colors when they begin blooming in early fall — the same time high school and college football season begins.

Traditionally, either football players presented these mums as corsages to their cheerleaders at the Homecoming game, or, when a boy presented to his date at the high school Homecoming Dance, a mum corsage. These situations differ regionally according to “school spirit” customs.

Well, that happened years ago; I don't know if that tradition still happens. I haven't been to a Homecoming game or dance (like I could dance — NOT!) since high school, which was several eons ago.

Anyway, the stems of these mums tend to be stiffer to support the weight of the huge flowerheads. They are a magnificent sight to see and grow. If you are unable to grow an honest-to-goodness football mum variety, you can trick any mum to become one, although a smaller version. The trick is to allow only one flower bud to remain at the stem apex. All side buds are pinched off, allowing only that single bud to develop. All the energy transfers to the development of that solitary bud and makes it grow large. Carnations, sunflowers, and other garden flowers can achieve this same process.

These and all other mums can become hardy perennials in zones 5 to 10 if grown in plenty of sun and well-drained, fertile soil.

Clematis

Clematis hybrida; viticella



These stunning beauties are a top choice for those seeking a vibrant garden display. Clematis vines never fail to impress, whether trained on a trellis, pergola posts, fences, or even intertwined with other shrubs like climbing roses for a more naturalistic look. With a range of species and varieties, they offer a kaleidoscope of colors and blooms from spring to fall, making them a must-have for any gardener.

Several species of clematis bloom from late spring to fall, including the popular, vividly colorful summer-blooming and dinnerplate-sized varieties. For our purposes here, look for '**Ramona**' or '**William Kennett**' for their sky blue to delft blue shades. They have large,

dinnerplate-sized flowers that bloom all summer and are hardy in zones 4 to 9.

Ramona may be difficult to find in garden centers, but specialty online nurseries will undoubtedly have her available, as well as many other larger-flowered varieties.

When caring for Clematis, avoiding damaging the stems, such as bending them or damaging the thin bark, is essential. This breakage will only cause the vines to experience a significant setback in developing well. Try to purchase undamaged vines and be very careful when planting.

These vines must climb on sturdy supports in as much sunlight as possible, in fertile, well-drained, and mulched soil. Mulching helps cool the roots, retain moisture, and control weeds. With these care tips, your Clematis should thrive in your garden.

Patience is vital for growing Clematis. They are not quick growers; it may take two or more years to become established and bloom. But the wait is worth it for the outstanding color they bring to your garden.

Most Clematis species and varieties are slow to wake up in the spring after winter slumber. This lethargy can cause concern for new gardeners, who may think the vines are dead. Allow them enough time to awaken.

Colocasia — Elephant Ears

Colocasia esculenta



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

When I first saw it in a garden center, I had mixed feelings. Its enormous height and the massive leaves and flowers thrilled but also partially intimidated me. I felt like Lemuel Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's "*Gulliver's Travels*." It was when he encountered the land and giant people of Brobdingnag. This plant is amazing!

Growers nickname it "Elephant Ears" or "Taro." The dark green leaves have a coarse texture with prominent veins. Some varieties have bronze or even pure black (dark purple) leaves.



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

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

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

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

Crinum — Giant Spider Lily

Crinum x amabile



Although the name suggests a lily, this bulb is related to the Amaryllis and Hippeastrum families. The "spider" name is for the long, pink-to-red petals and stamens extending several inches from the flower stalk.

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

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

It is a favorite landscape plant in warm, frost-free locations. As the plant ages, the flower stalk (inflorescence) can reach over 5 feet. It blooms all summer with a sweet, lily-like fragrance. It loves to grow in partial shade in fertile, well-drained soil. However, it may be challenging to find these bulbs in garden centers.

Dahlia — Dinnerplate Dahlias

Dahlia hybrida



Like many popular garden flowers, Dahlias offer a wide range of multicolored varieties. But having lots of colors does not make any flower group or individual spectacular or unusual. There has to be “something else” that defines this unique accolade. Many varieties have huge flowerheads aptly referred to as dinnerplate-sized Dahlias.

I must acknowledge that the words “dinner-plate” and “dinnerplate” can confuse people. When referring to excessively large flowers, the description of “dinnerplate-size” is typically used. There is also confusion with using “flower-head” or “flowerhead”. Oh, whatever! I know, English is a confusing language, both written and spoken.

Dahlias have always been a favorite tuberous garden plant since their discovery by early explorers (at the tragic degradation of indigenous people) in Mexico and extending into northern areas of South America. As a member of the vast Aster or Daisy family, over 30 species live in this broad area.

Dahlias are not very hardy — zone 8 and above — and do not survive underground during a cold winter. Suitable microclimates, like being planted near the south side of a house foundation, can extend that hardiness down to zone 6 (maybe 5).

Look at some garden catalogs and websites, for there are several colorful dinnerplate-sized varieties available.

Dracunculus — Dragon Arum; Dragon Lily; Voodoo Lily

Dracunculus vulgaris or *Arum dracunculus*



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How can I describe this plant in a gentlemanly and “cultured” way? Another common name coined by a famous mail-order nursery (*Plant Delights Nursery*) is **Viagra Lily**. I am not falling into that trap of describing this name.

Occasionally, you may read or see on TV a news-fluff piece about a large tuberous Arum Lily plant, called a **Corpse Flower** (*Amorphophallus titanum*), blooming in a botanical garden greenhouse. Not only is this plant large, weirdly colorful, and, ahh... “erect,” but it also smells

terrible, like a decomposing human body. That's what people usually describe, for I hope never to encounter a "dear departed" in such a state. Anyway, it always draws people to ogle and giggle — something nobody does when viewing a petunia.

Although being much smaller in size and girth, this Dragon Lily can grow in your flower bed. Granted, it may not be an attention-grabber, laughter-laced, last news item for the six o'clock Action News show, but it can be a curiosity plant for the entire neighborhood.

Hardy in zones 6 and above, it is native to northern Africa, the eastern Mediterranean, and central Middle Eastern locations. Gardeners in lower zones can still plant it in the garden, but will need to dig up and store it over the winter before the ground freezes. Container growing is also an excellent option for enjoyment. Treat these tubers like you would for Dahlias.

This perennial grows like *Colocasia* (Elephant Ears), described earlier, from tubers (modified stems that store energy like bulbs) and produces long, fan-shaped, dark green leaves. These divided leaves have a "somewhat" appearance of a dragon's claw — thus the common dragon name. These plants are not true lilies, but people often use the lily moniker for tuberous or bulbous flowering plants.

By midsummer, a fleshy, open vase-shaped fusion of petals, called the spathe, emerges. Extending upward from inside it is the spadix, a long, slender, purplish-black flower stalk. Some people call it the dragon's tail. Fortunately, I have found no mention of it being called "something else" of a male dragon. This structure contains both stamens and pistils, but they usually develop at different times to prevent self-fertilization.

This inflorescence releases a foul odor — not an immediate public alert, or neighborhood-evacuation order, but not overly horrible. This odor lasts for a day or two, which attracts flies, the flower's pollinators. Growers advise against planting this arum near open windows or where you spend time outdoors. Both the smell and the flies may prove troublesome. Unsuspecting non-gardeners may suspect you have a hygiene problem or that your sewer system is clogged up.

So, where can you plant this smelly dragon? It prefers shady, fertile, and moist (but not boggy) areas. It can tolerate partial sunlight but not constant exposure. Older, well-grown plants can reach three feet tall, but expect smaller-scale results.

You may have trouble finding this plant in your local flower nursery or garden center. Online specialty nurseries will prove more reliable.

Echinacea — Coneflower

Echinacea purpurea hybrids



The colorful varieties offered today are nothing like the ones grown in your grandmother's garden. Years ago, it was an underappreciated ornamental wildflower, but that has all changed. Hybridizers or plant breeders recognized its exciting possibilities and made an excellent plant even better...and bigger.

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

Coneflowers thrive in the hot sun, dry soil, and, for a short period, wet ground. Their large flowers bloom in late June and continue all summer. They will look rather untidy, so clip off spent flowers. They can grow to over two feet tall and are hardy from zones 3 to 10. Other qualities are being “butterfly magnets” (attracting butterflies far and wide) and making excellent cut flowers for bouquets.

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

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

Try to avoid seed-grown strains, as they revert to the species characteristics and lack the outstanding color, blossom shapes, and larger sizes of newer plants.

Epiphyllum — Night-Blooming Cereus

Epiphyllum oxypetalum



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I am reluctant to include this tropical cactus, as it is not a good candidate for your flower garden. This is strictly a houseplant so you can enjoy it all summer long on your patio or deck. When discussing the subject of vespertine or nocturnal flowers, this huge-flowering plant is always in the spotlight.

Believe it or not, the tropical rainforests have cactus plants (technically called thornless orchid cacti). They grow in the nooks and crevices of tree limbs, thriving in limited amounts of rotting vegetation “soil.”

They can be “almost easy” to grow if you follow the following recommended procedures:

- Plant them in soil-less potting soil, but add additional drainage material.
- The potting medium needs to dry out periodically, which naturally happens high up in the trees. Constantly wet soil will rot the roots.
- These plants need filtered or early-morning sunlight. Intense afternoon sunlight or constant deep shade will damage their large, flattened stems (masquerading as leaves).
- The most essential requirements are constant warmth, high humidity, and periodic low doses of water-soluble fertilizer during the summer months.

The winter months are a different story:

- You must place these cacti indoors (to avoid cold and freezing temperatures)
- A cool room temperature is ideal, and they will enjoy being near a bright window.
- The plant has to be on a low-water and no-food diet. The occasional — and I mean occasional — watering prevents constant dehydration and death. Here is where these plants share a similar problem with their desert cactus cousins.

Okay, let’s get to the critical aspect of night-time flowering. When large and old enough, and with previous summer and winter practices fulfilled, this cactus “may” bloom.

During the summer, you will see the beginnings of large finger-like flower buds forming. As the weeks progress, they grow larger.

Then, during one early summer evening, these enlarged flower buds swell and slowly open. In my experience, the flower reaches maximum unfolding and super-sized display by midnight. If you are not “wowed”

by their dinnerplate-sized, multi-petaled, multi-stamen, and pearly white flowers, their magnificent, incredible, and fantastic perfume will.

The fragrance will increase to the point that you can smell it yards away — your yard and all your neighbors' yards throughout the night.

Reports of people having garden parties highlight the occasional blooming. Now, don't scoff at this plan, for how many times have you attended, or hosted, a New Year's Eve party? I am not sure of any countdown, but here, you can see the petals slowly unfold.

Don't expect these plants to produce a plethora of blossoms; they make up for quantity with quality. Please expect one — possibly two — flowers opening on any particular summer evening. If you experience more, you are doing something right in growing this unique plant!

The question you are asking is, "*Why are the flowers so large?*" A follow-up question is, "*Why so much fragrance?*" The answer to both questions concerns the pollinators of these blossoms. It's not moths, but tropical bats. Don't worry. Our small, native bats prefer to eat mosquitoes instead of flower nectar.

Gerbera — Gerbera Daisy; Transvaal Daisy; Barberton Daisy

Gerbera jamesonii



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Helianthus — Sunflower

Helianthus annuus; argophyllus



Our favorite star is 93 million miles above our head — give or take a few feet. Here, on our favorite planet, *Helianthus* attempts to stretch to a tiny fraction of that distance. It shares one stellar quality — the ability to mimic the sun’s brilliance, but to a much lesser extent.

Most commercially available sunflower seeds are of annual varieties. We are all familiar with the large seed-heads of tall, massive plants nodding by the side of vegetable or flower gardens. Over the past few years, interest in wildly colorful sunflowers has grown into a “cult following.” With advances in genetics, new, unusual varieties have emerged on the gardening scene.

At times, you can be like Lemuel Gulliver in his travels when encountering the different sizes of these plants, which also vary in startling degrees, like the flower heads, which can measure up to two feet in diameter and filled with seeds. They are a sight to behold.

Not only has the petal color changed with today's sunflowers, but so has the size and shape of these flower heads. Like many of our other garden flowers, single-flowered types can also produce double-flowered varieties — those with an excessive number of petals. Sunflowers are not an exception. If you have never seen or grown the varieties called **Teddy Bear** (which received the Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society in 2015) and **Honey Bear** (photo shown above), you are missing out on a wonder of wonders in flower gardening.

Each variety can grow tall but has very thick stems to support the enlarged flower heads, which are stuffed full of yellow to orange petals. Here is an example of how the interior disc florets can sometimes change to resemble the ray florets. The overall appearance of this variety is a shaggy, sometimes frizzy ball of petals.

Hemerocallis — Daylily

Hemerocallis fulva hybrids



This perennial is ideal if you want a supremely colorful addition to any flower garden.

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

Daylilies are not “true lilies” but resemble them. Unlike lilies, these plants do not form bulbs but swollen roots or rhizomes that spread outward and occasionally sprout new plantlets. 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).

Today, there are billions (not really, but close to it someday) of *Hemerocallis* varieties worldwide. For teasing encouragement, several large-flowered varieties are available. Your nearby nursery or garden center will have a few colorful potted selections. Plenty of specialty online nurseries offer a wider selection of those mega-sized varieties, available as bare-root plants. One such example of a huge variety is a “**spider daylily**” shown above with extended petals. My apologies, I do not know its name because I saw it at a public garden.

Plant daylilies in plenty of sunlight and 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 exotic members that flaunt their size, color, and bloom. This group of plants is no exception. Being part of the extensive Mallow family, they are tall-growing perennials or woody, tropical shrubs.

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

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

Those tropical plants are sensitive to cold temperatures and need to be stored indoors over the winter.

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

All varieties prefer full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. With all those flowers and foliage, please water these plants during extended dry spells.

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

Created by the hybridization of several related species in 1955, this hardy (zones 4 to 9) perennial remains one of the best cultivars to grow in any garden. It reaches 8 feet tall (possibly more) and 4 feet wide on well-established plants. For smaller growing plants, I suggest plopping them into large containers.

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

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

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



Another incredible variety is *Hibiscus moscheutos* '**Heartthrob**' (shown above). Introduced in 2012, this zone 4-9 perennial has the darkest flowers available for a *Hibiscus* (as of this writing). The 10-inch-diameter flowers are reddish-black, with the unopened, glossy buds almost black.

If you are an amateur CSI investigator, the color resembles the grizzly shade of dried or old blood. Can there be a true-black flower? Most botanists feel it may be an elusive color. For this Hibiscus, the flower color is a deep garnet red when backlit by the sun, but near black in partial shade or on cloudy days.

Unlike most other varieties, this plant is more compact, growing 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 this Hibiscus in a hot and dry location. But it has suffered no ill effects.

Growers offer this variety only as potted plants or dormant roots by larger garden centers and mail-order nurseries.

Hydrangea — French Hydrangea

Hydrangea macrophylla



Growers label these plants, also known as Big-Leaf or French Hydrangea, as being perennials or semi-woody shrubs. They begin as herbaceous perennials but later transform into woody, hollow stems by fall. They are hardy to zones 5-9, but lower zones are problematic. Severe cold conditions will kill the new growth buds on the older stems.

It may surprise you that these plants can thrive in partly shady areas. Yes, you can raise them in full sunlight for most or all of the day, but a major prerequisite is that they grow in consistently moist soil. This requirement is especially crucial for gardeners in hot climates.

The reason for providing moist soil is that these plants have large leaves and extensive growth. When grown in partially to fully shaded locations, the plants can tolerate periodic dry soil without issues.

Most Hydrangeas are low-maintenance, but you also must be careful when pruning them. Cut them back at the wrong time of the year, and it will delay flowering for two years. My advice is to leave them alone. New varieties now on the market show great promise of easing fears about “messing things up” when pruning. They bloom on current growth and provide longer enjoyment from spring to fall.

Today’s newer varieties bloom all summer with either large blue or pink flower-heads, depending on the pH of your garden soil. Look for the variety called **Endless Summer**. This aptly named type has an outstanding display all summer.

There are other varieties with similar names, but they all have this repeat-blooming capability. Most can grow to over three feet tall and wide, with sturdy stems to support the massive blooms. You will find many of these new varieties in larger garden centers or nurseries.

Hydrangeas always remind me of my old high school and college chemistry classes. It involves determining whether an unknown solution's pH is acidic or basic based on its color. Hydrangea “flowers” exhibit a similar phenomenon: they change color depending on soil pH. What we think of as flowers are actually bracts or modified leaves. The actual flower structures are small and located in the center of these bracts.

To make these bracts blue, acidify the soil by adding aluminum sulfate. To turn them pink, add lime (calcium carbonate) to the ground. The more of these soil additives we add, the deeper the bracts' color.

What happens to hydrangeas with white bracts? Here, you do not need to add chemicals, as the plants will remain white regardless of soil pH.

I advise caution when adding these chemicals to the soil. They can damage or “sicken” surrounding plants due to the significant change in soil pH.

Hymenocallis — Spider Lily or Peruvian Daffodil

Hymenocallis festalis or *Ismene festalis*



Spring would not be the same without lawns and gardens having crowds of golden daffodils dancing in a breeze. William Wordsworth saw (rough guess) ten thousand blossoms blooming near a lake and under trees. Viewing a clump of *Narcissus* in your border may not be poetic, but it is just as uplifting.

Daffodils last but for a few weeks, and then the show is over until next spring. What a bummer. But what can bloom during the summer that can mimic those blossoms?

Hymenocallis belongs in the impressive Amaryllis family, such as those Christmas gift Amaryllis bulbs. No, they do not bloom as large, but have those long, blade-like leaves.

The cluster of blossoms on two to three-foot-tall stalks (technically called an inflorescence) has the familiar daffodil-like shape. The thin outer petals flare outward like spider legs, while the inner, delicate, membranous petals fuse to form a cup. Viewing these flowers for the first time, they look “almost like” daffodils but have a noticeable, exotic difference. One feature that makes these plants more enjoyable is their powerfully sweet perfume, exuded primarily in the evening and during the night.

Although most *Narcissus* bulbs are hardy in cold climates, these South American bulbs are hardy only in zone 8 and above. Although all gardeners can plant the bulbs, only warmer winter locations can keep them in the ground. All cold-climate gardeners need to dig and store these large bulbs over winter. Like your Amaryllis gift plant, you can easily place the bulbs in large containers.

Flower color depends on the species; most have white petals, such as ***Ismene festalis* ‘Zwanenburg’** (shown above), but others sport eye-catching yellow blossoms, such as ***Ismene Sulfur Queen*** (shown below).



These plants (garden and container-grown) prefer partial sunlight and moist, well-drained soil. By late summer, allow the bulbs to endure drier soil to “harden them up” by late fall. Container plantings can remain in their pots but withhold water for most of the winter. This is extremely important, for the bulbs will not bloom in the summer without this dry-rest period.

Ipomoea — Moonflower Vine

Ipomoea alba bona-nox



Not everyone is a morning person. This popular climbing annual, a cousin of the Morning-Glory vine, blooms from evening until morning with large, velvety white blossoms. Think of these blossoms as natural, solar-powered night lights. Gee, is that what the moon is?

As the petals unfurl, they release a sweet, clove, or lily-like perfume into the warm summer night air. Morning shade helps to prolong blooming even into late morning. The perfect place for this beautiful vine is near a patio or deck where you can enjoy the perfume in the evenings.

Growing in sunlight and poor soil helps to form more flowers than leaves. Having too fertile soil causes the plant to produce more stems

and leaves rather than flowers. Put this vine on a low-nitrogen diet to allow it to become a lean, mean, photosynthetic blooming machine.

The vines bloom in midsummer to the first frost and are easy to grow from large, white to creamy-brown seeds. They are commonly available at many garden centers and in catalogs.

Iris

Iris germanica



There are many varieties of the large bearded iris, also known as German Iris (*Iris germanica*), available to gardeners. Botanists call them bearded for the prominent, fuzzy, 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.

Grow these irises in full sunlight and well-drained soil. The flower stems can reach 3 feet tall and bloom in late spring or early summer, lasting for about two weeks or more. Yes, they don't have a long bloom time, but they are stunning with all those vivid colors. All are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Check your local garden centers for the larger-blossomed, modern varieties. Online nurseries specializing in Irises offer a wider selection, including fragrant and historically rare varieties.

I recommend finding and purchasing varieties listed as “rebloomers,” which bloom again in mid to late summer. They provide an interesting way to impress your gardening friends.

Lilium — Lily

Lilium orientalis



No garden is complete without the beauty, grace, and wonder of a lily. We are all accustomed to the traditional Easter Lily. Still, there is a vast world of other lilies rich in color and fragrance, which you will love to have in your garden. I recommend you plant the following species and varieties. Don't delay in enjoying the large, colorful, and aromatic blossoms. Most can grow "fairly tall," but some will tower above our heads when grown in optimal conditions.

Growers classify one group as Oriental Lilies, which can grow over five feet tall, with many reaching up to eight feet or more! They bloom by midsummer and continue flaunting their stunning petals by fall. Like most garden lilies, they prefer full to part sun and fertile, well-drained

soil. If the garden is windy, tie the stems to a support pole to prevent them from breaking. It's worth the trouble to perform this action.

Lilium orientalis **Stargazer Lily** (shown above) is the variety most recognizable for garden lilies — maybe not in name but in size, color, and fragrance of the flowers. It also makes it a favorite among florists. So, why do I include it here if it is so popular? The answer is because it needs to be in your garden if it isn't there already. It is an oldie-but-goodie variety still grown by nurseries today.

Historically, this lily has been a significant genetic contributor to many of the lily bulbs sold today. Predecessors of this lily (based on wild species heritage) had their large flowers hang downward. They were pretty, but they hid their genuine beauty unless you crawled underneath on your back to view them. That is a rather undignified (and dirty) position for any gardener to experience.

In 1974, California lily breeder Leslie Woodriff created an upward-facing lily, which he named 'Stargazer.' What a glorious name for this stunning plant! From this lily, newer varieties appeared in other colors, all with the critical trait of having large blossoms face outward (and upward) for easy viewing.

Nurseries sometimes overlook offering Stargazer (compared to all the other Lilies) to the public. It is like beloved, older Hollywood actors being replaced by newer, high-profile (and box-office profitable) actors.



Developed in the early 2000s, double-flowered Oriental lilies (known as Rose-Lilies) took the gardening world by storm. For example, the variety called **'Thalita' Double Flowered Oriental Lily** (shown above) resembles 'Stargazer' but with multiple petals. As of this writing, it may be a mutation of 'Stargazer' or a unique look-alike. No matter, for it has beautiful colors and a high-octane perfume.



Another variety to be raised in every garden is called **Conca de' Or**, shown above.

The first time I saw this lily, it was over my head. I had to look up, and there were all those gorgeous eight to nine-inch blossoms looking down at me. One added benefit of having lilies at this level is that the fragrance is closer to your nose, without having to stoop.

This lily has enormous — and I mean massive — blossoms! They are white with a bright lemon-yellow interior. The stamens have a brick-red color.

Growers classify this lily as an Oriental/Trumpet hybrid (called Orienpet Lilies). They can reach up to 8 feet tall after growing for at least 3 years. It is hardy from zones 4 to 9.

Nymphaea — Water Lily

Nymphaea odorata



"I'm good for nothing except painting and gardening," French painter Claude Monet once said. Did you know his work, *"Water Lilies,"* is not just one oil painting but almost 250? Critics (along with the public) scored this work and others. There's always a critic lurking nearby.

Monet grew several water lilies in his famous gardens and painted them in various poses each year. You can say they were floral nudes. He LOVED them! Most water lilies he raised belong to semi-hardy hybrid varieties of the genus *Nymphaea*. Others belong to more tropical species.

All types grow in water – gee, what a surprise – and their roots and crowns need protection from being frozen. That could be very tricky, especially in northern areas.

They come in many outstanding colors, and many have light to strong fragrances ranging from almonds, spices, roses, lemons, and fruits. Think of them as water-growing peonies. Most of the perfume is released in the early evening, right after the petals fully open, but a few release scent during the day.

There are so many varieties to choose from, but it is best to buy them from a specialist nursery. Here, you can find which ones are hardier (zones 5-10) and fragrant in your area. One recommended variety (which authorities feel Monet grew himself) is **James Brydon** – a stunner with large, prolific, rosy-red, semi-double blooms with vivid yellow stamens. Plus – they smell of ripe apples! If Claude grew this plant, so should you.

Paeonia — Peonies and Tree Peonies

Paeonia officinalis; lactiflora; and Paeonia × suffruticosa



These gorgeous plants need no introduction, as gardeners have treasured them for generations. There are many recorded instances of them outliving the people who plant them, thus growing with future generations of a person's family. The genus *Paeonia* naturally occurs in the temperate and cold areas of the Northern Hemisphere.

Noted for their large, fluffy flowers on leafy stems, they bloom from mid-spring to early summer. These plants need a chilling period (winter) to stimulate the formation of flower buds.

Many peony varieties have different fragrances, including lemon, rose, honey, spice, and musk. Sometimes, a type may smell of dead fish. Do extensive research before purchasing any peony, so you don't get something "fishy".

One major classification of Peonies is that they are herbaceous. This means they grow like "regular" perennials but sprout from growth buds on thick, woody underground rhizomes (or roots). This structure resembles a gnarled piece of wood. By winter, all growth dies above ground, but new spring-growth buds live under the surface.

Plant all peonies in full sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. They are hardy from zones 3 to 8.

Regular maintenance for these outstanding perennials includes supporting the flower stems and removing spent blossoms as they fade. Over countless years of breeding, peony blossoms have become larger and heavier. So heavy that they can bend over to the ground. Not lovely, but what can a gardener do? One easy method is to purchase metal support rings (similar to tomato-cage wire hoops) to hold the developing flower stems and buds upright. Once done, enjoy the outstanding colors and fragrances of your Peonies.

Most larger garden centers will offer a few newer varieties, either as potted plants or as bare-rooted rhizomes with 3 to 5 growth "eyes." Online specialty nurseries will offer older heirloom varieties.



The other classification of these plants is called Tree Peonies (*Paeonia × suffruticosa*), shown above. Okay, the name is not what it appears to be. They are not growing as tall as an oak tree (that would be amazing), but they do develop above ground with woody rhizomes. When raised in prime conditions, these peonies can grow to nearly five feet tall in over ten years! When planting these Peonies, remember not to cut back or damage the wooden structures.

To the untrained eye, Tree Peonies will look the same as Herbaceous Peonies, but will have larger flowers on substantially taller plants. They are also more expensive. For new gardeners, I recommend starting with herbaceous varieties to experience their delightful blossoms and understand how these plants grow and develop.

Papaver — Oriental Poppy

Papaver orientale



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Growing poppies can strike fear in many gardeners (especially in today's messed-up political environment) due to concerns of opium production. But for this very hardy (zones 3 to 7) perennial species, it is safe to grow in any home garden. Unlike the *Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy), Oriental poppies do not contain the narcotic alkaloids chemicals that transform into opium and heroin.

Several nurseries offer this species as seeds or rooted plants each spring. They will take a year to develop, but by the following spring, the brilliant blooming begins. What a show they put on with their 5 to 8-inch-plus diameter petals for a few weeks!

There are several varieties available, showcasing brilliant red, pink, orange, yellow, or white petals, with black or purple interiors and many stamens. Most types have single petals, but fluffy double ones are available. There are also some types (within the Goliath Series) that provide even larger blooms (over 8 inches in diameter). Look for the brilliant red “**Beauty of Livermere**” or the bright orange “**Prince of Orange**”, both of which glow in the springtime sun.

Like most other perennials, plant these outstanding poppies in as much sun as possible, along with well-drained, fertile soil. Most plants can grow to over two feet and as wide. To prevent excessive reseeding, cut off most of the developing seed pods, leaving one or two as a safeguard for future reseeding. Allow the plants to remain growing undisturbed for the rest of the year.

Passiflora — Passion Vine; Passion Flower or Maypop

Passiflora incarnata; *caerulea*



If you had to vote on the world's most unusually constructed flower, this would be number one. Most of these plants are tender, tropical vines, but a few, called Maypops, are hardy and can survive winter conditions. As the nickname implies, they begin to bloom in late spring.

These vines use coiled tendrils to grab hold of adjacent shrubs and other supporting structures, lifting themselves to heights of 8 to 12 feet and more.

The common name of 'Passion Vine' results from two opposed ideas. One notion is that eating its succulent egg-sized fruit gives you

romantic tendencies. At the same time, the other, more acceptable idea concerns the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Many South Americans call it the legendary “Flower of the Five Wounds.” According to historical accounts, sometime around 1609, Spanish missionaries wrote about a beautiful flower growing in the South American rainforests that symbolized Christ’s Passion before and during his crucifixion.

We have to have a vivid imagination of what the flower parts represent:

- Ten sepals and petals of the flower represent the ten apostles who witnessed the crucifixion of Christ.
- The corona, or a ring of wavy filaments, represents the crown of thorns.
- The five stamens are symbolic of the five wounds, while the three stigmas represent the three-headed nails.
- For extra dramatic flair, the palmate leaves and the many wavy tendrils represent the hands and whips of His Roman persecutors.
- Like Jesus, the flowers remain alive (well, in full open bloom) for only a day.

With hundreds of species, hybrids, and varieties available to the home gardener, the flowers’ sizes and colors are limitless. While most species grow in subtropical and tropical areas of North and South America, all can grow in colder zones if grown in containers.

If you need a hardy variety, try *Passiflora caerulea*, commonly called the **Blue Passion Vine** (shown above). Four-inch diameter flowers with beautiful white petals ringed with blue to purple filaments appear all summer. They also have a lovely, sweet perfume.

This species is also among the most commonly available in many nurseries. Its twining vines can grow to well over 15 feet if uncontrolled. By the fall (in warmer locations), egg-sized, deep orange

fruits become ripe, then you can pick and squeeze them to produce 'Passion-fruit' juice.

Evergreen in tropical climates, this species is deciduous (loses its leaves) in cold-winter climates. Its hardiness is from zones 6 to 10. Northern gardeners in zone 5 can winter over this species only with excellent protection against severe cold. Lower-zone gardeners will need to grow this vine in containers and overwinter it in a basement or a heated garage.

All Passion Vines make excellent container subjects. If you have a bright window, it can bloom indoors during the winter.

Ranunculus — Persian Buttercup; Turban Buttercup

Ranunculus asiaticus



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You have probably seen these potted plants growing in florists' or garden centers next to springtime offerings of multi-colored pansies, violas, and primroses. New gardeners may be perplexed into thinking they are multi-petaled roses, but they are far from being so.

These colorful beauties are large, multi-petaled buttercups closely related to our familiar yellow, wild, meadow buttercups (*Ranunculus repens*) and distantly related to columbines and delphiniums. To confuse you even more, the single-petal varieties of this species look

uncannily like Oriental Poppies! And to venture even further into weird lookalikes, some people even compare the flowers to those of small blooming peonies.

No matter what they appear to resemble, those mega-petaled blossoms display many gorgeous colors, ranging from light pink to deep rose, red, yellow, white, and eye-opening orange, with various intermediate creamy shades to boot. Goodness sake, they are all spectacular!

Ranunculus asiaticus is one of several species available to gardeners. It is also the most admired for its gorgeous petals. These plants can be grown in a garden, a container, or a pot. They grow from stem tubers with characteristic “claws” or projections. When planting these tubers, the claws must be placed about 2 or 3 inches into the soil.

Like most summer-blooming bulbous plants, this plant is only hardy to Zones 8 and above. Colder zones need to dig up the tubers late in the fall, as the plants begin to enter dormancy. They must be stored in dry to slightly moistened potting soil until replanted in the early spring, preferably after thawing.

Ranunculus species detest hot growing conditions, unlike most summer-blooming bulbous plants. The plants prefer cool conditions from early spring to midsummer for optimal growth, development, and bloom potential. They like to grow in very fertile, well-drained soil in plenty of sunlight. If your afternoons are noticeably hot, find a spot that is partly shady at this time.

These plants make excellent container-grown plants and are also valued as cut flowers for indoor displays, lasting up to eight days in a vase. The plants grow to a maximum of 2 feet and are slightly narrower, with dark green, serrated leaves like those of carrots or parsley.

Garden centers and bulb specialty nursery catalogs offer several varieties and some species of these plants. One popular variety is the **Tecolote Strain**, which features several multilayered, excessively petaled, bright colors, including bicolor pastel shades. This strain

produces the largest flower diameters—some up to 6 inches (or more) across.

Rosa — Rose

Rosa hybrida



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

There are two types of taller-growing roses: landscape or shrub roses, and climbing species and varieties. Landscape roses, over time, produce long, arching canes. Eventually, these canes can reach over your head. Climbing roses grow similarly but will have sturdier canes or support from neighboring plants or supporting structures to reach higher.

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

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

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

Unlike their older counterparts, which bloom for a few weeks in late spring or early summer, modern roses can delight us all summer. Shrub roses are accurately advertised as being the most floriferous, longest-blooming, and exceptionally hardy. Over the past few years, new ever-bearing landscape roses (such as the stunning **David Austin English Shrub Roses**) have great potential for all-summer blooming. Other excellent candidates include several more modern hybrid tea roses.

All roses 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. They all offer improved disease and insect resistance, attractive color options, and continuous blooming. They show great potential to endure periodic neglect, particularly in drought conditions.

Sprekelia — Aztec Lily; Jacobean Lily; St. James Lily

Sprekelia formosissima



If you had to describe the flower of this bulb (without viewing the above picture), it would resemble a red-flowered Christmas Amaryllis crossed with an orchid. On average, these bright red flowers are four inches long and appear before the leaves. There is one flower per 12 to 20-inch-long stem. The number of stems that appear depends on the bulb's age and size.

Place each bulb about four inches deep in well-drained, fertile soil in late spring. Sprekelia prefers plenty of sunlight to develop and bloom well. It is not a hardy bulb—estimated for zones 7 and above—so be

sure to dig up the bulbs in the fall and store them in a cool, dry, dark area until late summer.

As usual with most of the plants in this ebook, you can plant them in outdoor containers for more up-close, eye-catching appeal. Like popular Christmas Amaryllis, *Sprekelia* can be started indoors in pots for winter-time indoor blooming. I recommend timing the blooming for those tundra-bleak days of January or February. Anything as colorful as these flowers will be cheerfully welcomed.

Tulipa — Tulip

Tulipa hybrida



Tulips originated in the Middle East and became a must-have item. Poets and artists praised their beauty. If television were around, HGTV would sell them.

In Western Europe, this fascination became an addiction to status symbols. Wealthy people purchased tulips to impress their friends. Those friends had to impress their friends and so on down the line.

This craze peaked around 1634 to 1637. It became known as the Tulipmania era. It was something like the California Gold Rush; instead of gold fever, people got tulip fever. They wanted to grow, invest, sell, buy, cheat, and steal tulip bulbs. Several people sold their houses to

afford one or two bulbs! They quickly made fortunes and eventually lost when reasonable people asked, *“Are we crazy? Wake up, people!”*

Tulipmania ended, and they became ordinary spring-blooming flowers. A few enterprising people in Holland knew they were still a good thing and continued to grow and sell them. Today, selling tulips and other spring-blooming bulbs (as well as Fall-purchased bulbs and florist bouquets) is a multi-billion-dollar industry. Who knew such a beautiful flower could cause such historical excitement?

As with all the other spring-flowering bulbs, plant tulips in the fall. They prefer as much sunlight as possible, and – this is important – well-drained, sandy or gravel-based soil. Tulips hate constantly moist or wet soil. When they go dormant in the summer, the underground bulbs prefer to be dry. They love drought conditions!

You can force early blooming varieties indoors in containers for winter pleasure.

Conclusion

We always seem to be attracted to the bigger things in life. Be it elephants, whales, pickup trucks, houses, yachts, or hot air balloons, flowers are also surprisingly included. Visit any home garden, nursery, or garden center, and our eyes are immediately drawn to those flowers that stand out for their larger diameter and color. Even tiny flowers need to be noticed. If not grouped in abundance, a single blossom becomes lost and unnoticeable.

The above selection of garden flowers highlights our attentiveness to larger-than-life appearances. Although some plants rely on small flowers combined to give the impression of a giant flower, they still draw our attention to the whole rather than the individual parts. Mother Nature sure knows how to draw attention to them from pollinating insects and our eyes.

There is nothing wrong with including plenty of the above flowers in any garden bed or border. Many are also outstanding for providing cut flowers for indoor enjoyment. Here, they can be especially effective in fostering a greater appreciation than the limited-time outdoor attraction. Nevertheless, they will all be sights to behold for your gardens throughout the growing season.

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this ebook about growing big and beautiful garden flowers. Although they are spectacular in their own right, let's never ignore the smallest blossoms that nature has created. If you look closely at them, you will see even more grandeur in their appearance.

My other ebook, ***Pretty Tall Bloomers***, also lists unique but tall-growing flowers you may wish to grow in your garden.

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com/> which includes my other PDF 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.

Read more at <https://gedwinvarner.com/>