

Home/Garden



Recorder/Pat Allen

A special time

The garden in high summer

At this time of the summer the sun is high and hot, shining down on a garden filled with familiar flowers, many with rayed, daisy-like blossoms reflecting back the sun's heat and brilliance. In contrast there are also some unusual flower forms and colors for accent and interest.

Shasta daisies with the familiar golden center surrounded by snowy-rayed petals, grow more neatly and bloom for a longer period than the familiar ox-eye daisy of the meadow, yet they are no more demanding. You can easily start them from seed yourself in the early spring or buy plants from a nursery for years of increasing bloom.

Then there are the golden "daisies," heliopsis which reaches heights of two to three feet with three- to four-inch blossoms, and helenium which produces orange, scarlet and mahogany flowers as well as sunny gold.

Coreopsis, in all its varieties, produces golden daisy-like flowers. *C. verticillata* can reach a height of three feet, but always remains a neat mound of beautiful, fine foliage, covered with two inch blossoms. Goldfink is a dwarf variety with beautiful flowers on a nine-inch plant that is perfect for an edging or in the front of the border.

Reminiscent of a Mexican fiesta is the gaillardia or blanket flower. Though so tropical in appearance this flower with its red center and yellow- and red-rayed petals is hardy, if planted in the sun in soil that is light and well drained. I cannot think of daisies without also thinking of the black-eyed susans that bloom by their side in my pasture.

Rudbeckia fulgida, Goldsturm Strain, a member of the coneflower family, is a cultivated variety that needs no more fussing than the common daisy.

Echinacea purpurea, or purple coneflower, resembles the common daisy in that it has a yellow center and rayed petals, but the center is bronzed and those petals are recurved and a unique shade of purplish pink. They are easy to grow in the garden and very tolerant of dry conditions, a real blessing this year.

In sharp contrast to these sunny daisies are the echinops and eryngium, odd names for two odd, but striking plants.

Echinops is perfectly described by its common name of globe thistle. The foliage is very similar to the deeply cut leaves of the thistle and the "flowers" are spiky globes of a subtle shade of metallic blue that are prized in dried arrangements. The three- to four-foot plant is also handsome at the back of the border.

Eryngium, or sea holly, also has deeply cut leaves that are almost silver in color and elongated spiky blooms that are not prickly to the touch. Like echinops, eryngium can be air dried very easily and used in dried arrangements.

Sea lavender, *Limonium*

Pat
Leuchtman



Between
The Rows

latifolium, which is not a lavender and does not grow in the sea, is a perennial static and is also excellent to use in dried arrangements. The fine creamy flowers dry easily when hung upside down in an airy room.

Finally, there are some white flowers that bloom in high summer. My Miss Linaard phlox is starting to bloom right now and it will be followed by a later blooming variety, White Admiral. Mount Fuji is another white phlox which has particularly strong flower heads on sturdy stems.

Phlox is a wonderful flower and if you are like me, you won't be able to confine yourself to white. Other varieties bloom in shades of pink, salmon, red, lavender and purple; some have a deeper colored eye. Some are as tall as four feet and some are dwarf with stems only six inches high.

On a very different scale is *cimicifuga*, or snakeroot. This six-foot tall plant will produce starry spikes of flowers. One enthusiast who planted his along a shady woodland path said they looked like sky-rockets going off in the gloaming.

Once, three or four years ago, I planted a small clump given me by a friend. I paid it no more heed and it has now grown into a rambunctious and solid colony — described by another friend as a "serious statement" at the back of the border.

Physostegia, false dragonhead, grows in a much more restrained fashion. This three-foot plant has bright green leaves on sturdy stems and six- to ten-inch spikes of small white snapdragon-like flowers. They like shade and damp, so do very well in a wild garden, but they also do fine in my dry, sunny border.

This summer we have had such heat that the main thing I feel I lack in my summer garden is a shady seat where I can admire the brilliant color punctuated with splashes of white. Next year.

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