

Home/Garden



Marigolds: Colorful annuals for any garden

By ANTHONY JOSEPH
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JACKSON, Mich. — One of the most popular, colorful, and easy-to-grow annuals for borders is a member of the calendula family — the pot marigold.

Since the marigold thrives in many climates, no garden should be without this steady bloomer. In fact, it does very well in northern cooler weather, where flowers appear sturdy and bright in the cool spring, late summer, and early fall.

So it's still not too late to buy marigolds in pots and set them out. But next year sow seeds indoors before spring, and then transplant them outside as the

seeds from China. Through his research he finally grew not only a magnificent golden blossom variety with no odor, but also produced a white marigold!

Choices of small marigolds, especially for borders, are Mexican or Signet marigolds, Yellow Gem, and Ursula (gold with orange eyes). All raise a dainty flower on a seven-inch plant, with the flowers resembling miniature single marigolds.

If you have marigolds in your garden, I am sure you have noticed something spectacular. Large-flowered and hedge marigolds have an unusual feature of "evening glow" that shows up any time daylight is waning, especially 20 minutes after sunset.

A garden's rogue gallery

Life, sex and death among the weeds

Pat
Leuchtman

Between
The Rows



Weeds get my respect — if only because they require so little to thrive and have such a tenacious hold on life. They teach me a lot about the nature of life, even as I rip them from the garden to dry and shrivel before throwing their dead bodies on the compost heap.

There are so many weeds: quackgrass, pigweed, burdock, milkweed, wild mustard, lambsquarters, thistle, horsetail, jewelweed, ground ivy, plantains, purslane, sorrel and stinging nettles. These have all come up in my garden and I've learned their names in self-defense, hoping it's true that knowing something's name will give you power over it.

By learning about my weeds, I've learned I could take my revenge on the purslane and lambsquarters by eating them; I could treat my poison ivy (another weed) with jewelweed juice, but in the end they cause me more trouble than I could ever cause them.

Sara B. Stein has now come along and written MY WEEDS (Harper and Row, \$19.95). She shares my fascination and respect because she has been trying to rout these weeds from her garden for seven years, but she also brings a lot of botanical knowledge and plant lore to amuse her while she weeds and curses. MY WEEDS has entertained, educated and amused me.

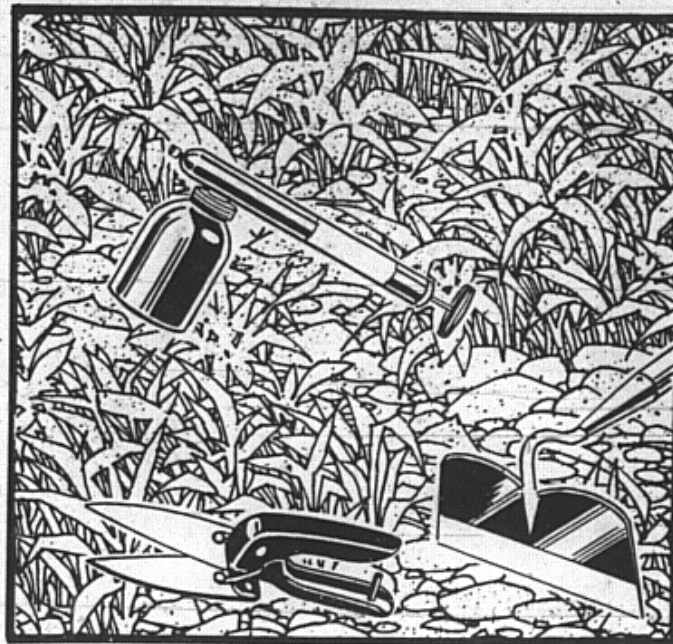
Stein begins with trying to define a weed. Currently the U.S. Department of Agriculture says "over 50 percent of our flora is made up of species that are considered undesirable by some segment of our society." On the other hand, most of us consider dandelions weeds, yet there is a considerable agricultural market for, and value in dandelion greens. To the starving colonists who founded Jamestown this early spring green with its high content of vitamins A, C and iron was a real life

saver. Definition is not an easy problem.

Stein takes a spade to the garden to dig a weed, attempting to identify its parts in an effort to understand it, but is immediately mired in the difficulty of defining and differentiating between prickles, spines and thorns, stems stolons and peduncles, and tubers and bulbs. There is no way to avoid giving a lot of scientific information using long Latinate words, but somehow she makes the meaning of vascular, microphyll, macrophyll, cordate and sessile very clear and she makes me feel learned while she delights.

Stein's essays begin with the weeds in her garden, wander through botany, history, legend and philosophy with charm and ease. In *The Bride's Bouquet*, she discusses what we think of as the voluptuous sexuality of flowers, "the coyness of a daisy's practiced daintiness, the suggestive fullness of a lady's slipper's belly, the summoning odor of a rose . . ." and goes on to discuss the asexual reproduction of plants by spores or pollination.

"The true story of a blossom and a bee is of a courtship between two chaste individuals met, by chance, on a byway of evolution. . . . Fertilization of parties unknown to either is achieved unwittingly by two innocents who are unaware of the significance of their graceful blooming and sweet sipping and I think my great grandmother would have approved of that."



So much of the discussion about weeds is about birth and death, their relentless spread and attempted eradication.

The essay *Chemical Warfare* gives a new view of a plant's own systems of chemical warfare, as well as man's invention of DDT and hundreds of thousands of other poisonous chemicals. Still the weeds grow and we try to find new ways to kill them: we are incredibly ingenious.

This book is made even more useful by the clear line drawings by Ippy Patterson. The detail of plants parts are instructional, and when laid out on the page, bindweed and bittersweet look as pretty and man-

ageable as the *rosa rugosa*.

Any reader of a book about weeds will instantly turn to the index to check on the habits and history of their own miserable selection — and they will not be disappointed. The index is complete and there are two cross-referenced lists of weeds, one by Latin name and one by a common name or two. Whether you know your weed as chickweed or *Stellaria media* you'll be able to locate information.

We're having another heat wave and after the recent torrential rains the weeds are taking off, but it's too hot to do much about it. I might as well sit in the shade with a cold drink and let MY WEEDS divert me from my murderous thoughts.