

Garden Column
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Late Summer Blooming Perennials
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Here's flowers for you; hot lavender, mints, savoury, marjoram; the marigold, that goes to bed wi' the sun and with him rises weeping. These are flowers Of late summer, and I think they are given to men of middle age. - Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale.

Each season has its colorful blooms and autumn-flowering perennials are some of the best. Autumn flowers grow all season so many are tall and stately. Autumn flowers also tend to be colors of the season, i.e. purples, rusts, scarlet, and gold. Following are a few perennial flowers that are late summer and autumn bloomers. And most can still be found at, where else, Bloomers!

Coreopsis, (tickseed) is prized for its colorful, daisy-like flowers, long bloom period, and trouble free growth. Coreopsis is tolerant of different soil types and growing conditions. Tall varieties can reach 4 feet in height and are good in the back of the border and in cutting gardens. Shorter, mounding varieties are more delicate and good for edging. Most coreopsis varieties produce yellow flowers, but pink varieties (Heavens Gate and Sapphire) are also available.

Coreopsis grow best in full sun and well drained soil. Apply a thin layer of compost each spring and, later, a layer of mulch to retain moisture and control weeds. Water during the summer if rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. Tall varieties may need to be staked to keep them upright. After the first killing frost, cut stems back to an inch or two above the soil line. Plants can be divided every few years as new growth begins in the spring.

Smooth oxeye is a vigorous, upright plant in the sunflower family, growing 3 to 4 feet tall. Smooth oxeye has many other names such as early sunflower, smooth sunflower, false sunflower, oxeye daisy, oxeye, oxeye sunflower, heliopsis sunflower, and sunflower heliopsis. Bloomer's carries 3 varieties including Loraine Sunshine, Summer Sun, and Tuscan Sun. The flowers of smooth oxeye have an orange-yellow center disk and yellow ray flowers. Blooming occurs in July through August or longer if spent flowers are removed.

Smooth oxeye is considered one of the most hardy plants for a wildflower garden border. It grows well in full sunlight to semi shady locations and in moderately moist to dry soils. It will tolerate drought. The plant grows in a wide range of soil types including nutrient-poor soils. It can be found growing in prairies, roadsides, open woods, edges of fields and thickets, and waste areas. Seeds readily shatter when mature and will germinate to produce new plants.

The nectar of smooth oxeye attracts butterflies, bees, and other pollinators. Birds utilize the seed as a food source and stems provide winter cover for beneficial insects.

Purple cone flower or Echinacea is another easy plant to grow and adds color to the late summer and early autumn landscape. Plants bloom from July through September and are attractive to bees and butterflies. The plant will grow in full sun to partial shade to a height of 36 to 48 inches. These hardy perennials, with their large daisy-like flowers, make a lovely, water-wise choice for borders, native-grass lawns and

dry gardens. And you can buy medicines made from this plant, labeled as Echinaceae, that boost the immune system and are popular for treating flu and colds.

Purple cone flowers will endure most conditions, tolerating heat and drought, but thrive in rich, well-drained soil and full sun. Organic compost or aged animal manure mixed into the soil before planting will improve the health of plants. Spent flowers can be cut off on a regular basis to extend the blooming period and used as cuttings in flower arrangements. Apply a fertilizer once a month during the gardening season to promote big, beautiful blossoms. Mulch to prevent weeds, conserve moisture and improve aesthetics. Cut plants to the ground in late winter after flowers have gone to seed.

Purple cone flowers may be attacked by insects including Japanese beetles and aphids. Insect injury may be reduced by removing weeds, discarding severely infested plants, releasing beneficial insects, and treating with neem oil spray or an organic pesticide. Diseases include anthracnose and powdery mildew. These can be controlled by avoiding overhead watering and applying a fungicide.

Yarrow is a hardy perennial with fern-like leaves and colorful blooms that are perfect for cutting and drying. The plants are easy to care for and remarkably durable. They tolerate dry spells and low soil fertility where other perennials would not. Yarrow blooms from mid summer to autumn in red, pink, salmon, yellow, or white colors. Yarrow is appealing in perennial borders, sunny rock gardens, or wildflower meadows and is a good butterfly attractant.

Yarrow thrives in full sun, hot and dry conditions, and soils with low fertility that are well drained. It does not tolerate wet soils. Apply a thin layer of compost each spring, followed by a 2 inch layer of mulch to retain moisture and control weeds. Water plants during the summer if rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. After the first killing frost, cut stems back to an inch or two above the soil line. Divide plants every 3 to 4 years as new growth begins in the spring. Powdery mildew may be a problem in humid areas.

Rudbeckias are easy to grow perennials that have golden, daisy-like flowers with black or purple centers. This group of plants includes black-eyed Susan.

Rudbeckia's bright flowers give the best effect when planted in masses in a border or wildflower meadow. Some species also have attractive gray-green foliage. Rudbeckias are relatively drought-tolerant and disease-resistant. Flower colors include yellow and gold, and plants grow 2 to 6 feet tall, depending on the variety.

Rudbeckias are easy to maintain. They make excellent cut flowers and are attractive to butterflies and bees. They grow best in full sun to light shade and well drained to dry soil. In the spring apply a thin layer of compost followed later by a 2 inch layer of mulch to retain moisture and control weeds. Water plants during the summer if rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. After the first killing frost, cut stems back to an inch or two above soil line. Plants may be divided every 3 to 4 years as new growth begins in the spring.