

June 23

Garden Patch

By Phyllis Webster

Grow Wild For Summer

Summertime roadsides and well-tended gardens have something in common. When the weather cooperates, they both fill with colorful warm-season blooms. This year's abundant rain ensures a bumper crop of summer flowers, many of which thrive equally well in untended fields or landscape beds.

Native "wild" flowers perform well in gardens that share a similar culture to the site where they grow naturally. Indian blankets, for example, thrive along highways and in sunny pastures with no care other than mowing intervals that allow the plants to reproduce. A garden in full sun that receives minimal irrigation, fertilizer or chemical controls offers a comparable growing environment



Beyond bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush, Texas wildflowers include all manner of flowering plants, from boldly tall yucca blooms to ground-hugging Blackfoot daisies.

Wildflowers easily grown as garden plants include:

Coneflowers — Many perennial and annual plants share the common name coneflower. Mexican hat (prairie coneflower) sports ray flowers with yellow and maroon markings. The raised center cones give the flowers the appearance of sombreros. Cones are surrounded by red ray flowers with yellow accents. Clasping leaf coneflower has leaves that "clasp" at the base of the stem. Its black, cone-shaped heads are surrounded by drooping golden yellow to brown ray flowers. Purple coneflower sports pink/purple petals with a cone-shaped bronze center. Various *Echinacea* and *Rudbeckia* cultivars abound.

Bee balm (*Monarda*)— Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds use bee balm as a nectar source. Lavender-to-pink colored flowers are solitary on a single, sturdy stem.

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*) — These short-lived perennials have brown, domed centers surrounded by bright yellow ray florets. Blooms occur all summer in full sun.

Gay Feather (*Liatris*) — An erect perennial, this native produces a stiff, cylindrical spike, which is covered in small purple flowers. In late summer, the blooms begin to open at the end of the spike and slowly descend downwards to the base.

Coreopsis (*Coreopsis*) — Golden-wave coreopsis is a hardy, upright annual that produces fragrant, bright yellow flowers accented with red-brown to purple bands around the eyes. Plains coreopsis, a hardy annual, has vibrant yellow flowers with maroon centers.

Oxeye Daisey (*Chrysanthemum*) — This hardy perennial forms dense colonies. Flowers are white with yellow centers and borne on single erect stems.

Verbena (*Verbena*) — Moss verbena is a sprawling perennial with small violet flowers that are arranged in clusters resembling tiny bouquets.

Other wildflowers with cultivated cousins include penstemons, salvias, cosmos, yarrow, sunflowers, milkweeds, asters and monardas.

For answers to your horticulture questions, please call the Texas AgriLife Extension, Hood County at 817-579-3280 or go online to visit lakegranburymastergardeners.org.

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