



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Easy Care Summer Flowers (May 11, 2024)

by Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardeners

Throughout the seasons, there are favorite plants that give color and beauty to our gardens in the form of flowers, while others add interest with foliage color and texture. Here are a few that generally need very little attention other than what is noted.

GAURA. We like this plant because of its long bloom period, typically from spring to fall. Its airy growth and movement of its wand-like blossoms are especially pleasing. The most common Gaura is 'Siskiyou Pink,' found at most garden centers. It can reach 2-4' tall and just as wide, with deep maroon buds, opening to rose pink flowers. Be sure to give it plenty of space to show off its true airy form. Gauras like full sun and moderate water. They don't tolerate transplanting very well, but if need be, just cut the top of the plant down, replant the root, and a new plant will start. Be patient; sometimes it takes a while, but it will come back. Usually, once you have one plant, you may see other seedlings popping up here and there after the first year. Let them grow, pull them out, or share them with a neighbor or friend.



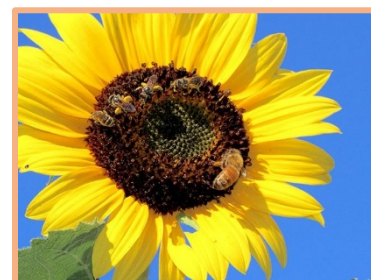
GAZANIA. Both clumping and trailing forms of gazania are common sights in landscapes with their showy display of color during peak bloom. They grow in full sun and tolerate poor soils. These perennials have lobed leaves that are dark green above the gray undersides. Flowering stems are 6-10 inches tall, with 3-4 inch blossoms, often with dark centers. Colors include several combinations of yellow, orange, white, and pink. Most varieties bloom beautifully on sunny days. The blossoms close up at night and during cloudy weather.

One of the newer varieties available is Gazania 'Frosty Kiss' (*Gazania splendens*), which grows to about 10 inches tall and wide. Its silver foliage combines well with its white, yellow, orange, and rose-colored flowers. Another plus is the fading flowers eventually drop off cleanly.



LANTANA. These fast-growing American natives are valued for a profuse show of color over a long season. Solid colors include pink, purple, white, gold, yellow, lilac, lavender, vivid orange, red, and burnt orange. Other hybrids have mixed blossom color. 'Miss Huff' is orange and pink and can survive sharp frosts. One of our favorites is 'Confetti,' which grows 2-3 ft. by 6-8 ft. and the blossoms mix yellow, pink and purple. Another favorite is 'Goldmound,' which is fast-growing with dense clusters of golden-yellow flowers and is perfect for dry, sunny locations. Butterflies and bees are attracted to Lantana. Just remember that too much water or fertilizer will cut down on bloom.

SUNFLOWERS. If you haven't tried growing sunflowers in your garden, you are in for a pleasant surprise. They are fast-growing, so it's not too late to get started this month. If you want to grow them for indoor bouquets, there are pollen-free types. 'Valentine' grows 4-5' tall and has lemon-colored petals around dark chocolate centers. 'Cinnamon Sun' grows 5-7' tall, and the rich cinnamon-bronze petals also have chocolate centers. 'Angel's Halo' has multiple flowers on branching stems. The semidouble flower faces have center disks of short, tufted chrysanthemum-like petals. This one grows 4-6' and is great for bouquets. Sunflowers come in yellow, gold, chocolate, bronze, burgundy, chestnut red, and mahogany, as well as combinations of colors. This is a fun flower for kids to plant and watch grow.



ZINNIA. This is another common plant that has been a garden favorite for many years. Zinnias like full sun, love heat, and bloom from summer to early fall when given regular water, good soil, and fed generously. If you are looking for low-growing, petite zinnias, only 1 to 1½ ft. high and wide, look for hybrids 'Profusion Orange' and 'Profusion Cherry Pink'. These little zinnias make a nice border along a pathway or in between roses or other shrubs and perennials. If you need to brighten up a sunny spot in your garden, this little zinnia will perform for weeks with very little maintenance.

When the heat of summer gets too intense to stay outdoors for long, it's nice to look out the windows to see some cheerful blooms with butterflies and bees happily flitting back and forth.

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse North parking lot

Sat., May 11 - Luis Nursery Plant Clinic, Caldwell & Mariposa, Visalia - 10 am - 2 pm

Sat., May 18 – Hofman's Nursery Plant Clinic, 12491 W Lacey, Hanford – 10 am – 1 pm

Sat., May 18 - Oleander Presentation, Tulare Public Library, Tulare, 11 am - Noon

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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