



GARDEN NOTES

WILDFLOWERS

*By Jerry L. Goodspeed,
USU Extension Horticulturist*

September 1998

Summer-37

It has been said, "if a plant or weed is hard to control, call it a wildflower and let it grow." A few classify some of our native wildflowers as weeds, but I wish there were more of them to enjoy. Our mountains are filled with numerous wildflowers which begin blossoming mid to late July, and continue through the end of August. Right now many are in bloom, making a trip to the top of the mountains enjoyable and well worth the effort.

Some of our ornamental perennials used in flower beds are related to our native wildflowers. Breeding and hybridizing has improved them over time, but the original parents are still found in our mountains. Some of these include perennial geranium, penstemon, blue flax, rudbeckia, potentilla, delphinium, yarrow, and coneflower.

Recently I visited the Wildflower Farm in Vermont which specializes in wildflower seeds. They ship them throughout the United States and Northern America. As we toured their facility we saw wildflowers growing in all kinds of conditions and environments. The meadows and forests that surround their building are filled with a vast variety of flowers.

One of the things I noticed most was the different wildflowers thriving in specific locations. Shade-loving varieties were not found in sunny meadows, and sun-loving flowers were not planted in shady forest areas. This is an important lesson to learn. When planting wildflowers or other perennials, be certain to give them the correct sun expose to maximize their beauty.

Although the wildflowers in our mountains are relatives of cultivated varieties, please leave them in the mountains and buy landscape flowers from nurseries. Most flowers will not transplant from the mountains to the home landscape. They are not acclimated to the lower valley climate and will not survive the transplant. Moving wildflowers only reduces the native population and increases their own frustration when they die in the valley.

A necessary item to bring when looking at wildflowers is a good identification book. There are many available, but the best ones have large color pictures and a written description. Select one describing flowers in the intermountain area. Some books are too general and fail to include many of the flowers found in our specific area. Also, bring a paper and pencil to record what was found, where, and the date. This makes a nice reference for later use. Good friends who enjoy wildflowers are also nice to bring along. It's hard to describe the beauty of wildflowers to others, and it makes the day more enjoyable. Pack a picnic lunch with cold drinks, and bring

insect repellent and a map to make the day perfect. Add a hammock and a cool breeze and you have paradise.

Be careful when walking through the wildflowers not to trample them or damage the plants. Refrain from picking them, which I know is hard at times. Others will follow, so leave their beauty for their enjoyment.

Some of my favorite flowers found in higher meadows include meadow golden rod, wild pink geranium, purple fleabane daisy, meadow arnica, Indian paintbrush, fireweed, and blue penstemon. In moist and shady areas look for Western coneflower, Eaton's aster, elephant's head, and monkey flower.

Take some time this weekend to go into the mountains to enjoy the cool air and the beautiful flowers. If you run into a guy asleep in a hammock, please don't disturb him. Just leave a cold drink for him and kindly brush the mosquitos off his face.

For more information, contact your local [USU County Extension office](#).

Utah State University Extension is an affirmative action/equal employment opportunity employer and educational organization. We offer our program to persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 9 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Robert L. Gilliland, Vice-President and Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. (EP/09/1998/DF)