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"Ever Lasting" Annuals

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GARDEN NOTES

“EVER LASTING” ANNUALS

By Dennis Hinkamp

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Spring-40

Many annuals can be cut and used as dried flowers, which is a great way to bring color into the house year round.

“Why am I talking about planting flowers that can be dried now?,” asks Jerry Goodspeed, Utah State University horticulturist. “Because it’s time to order a few seeds from one of the myriad of garden catalogs lying on the coffee table. Most nurseries and garden centers also offer a variety of annuals that can be dried later in the season, but a few are hard to find, so you may need to be order seed from out of state.”

Annuals that enhance the landscape, and can be successfully dried, are often called “everlastings,” Goodspeed says. This term refers to their ease in drying and ability to keep their color for many years. Probably the most popular everlasting is the strawflower. They range in color from white to red, and yellow to burgundy. Tall varieties grow almost four feet tall. The dwarf varieties which may only reach 15 inches.

This is a great flower for Utah’s hot, dry landscape, he says. It thrives in full sun and can survive on less water than most annuals. It is also adaptable to many soil types, as long as it is not over watered. Strawflowers have three inch wide, daisy-shaped blossoms that are spectacular when planted in a group.

“Another one of my favorite everlastings is globe amaranth,” Goodspeed says. “These white, pink and purple flowered plants also thrive in full sun and hot, dry conditions. The flower resembles a large clover flower. These plants grow in about any type of soil, and are insect and disease-free. The tall varieties can grow up to two feet high. Again, I like the dwarf varieties that only reach six to 10 inches in height. These plants spread some as they grow, so I usually plant them eight to 12 inches apart.”

An everlasting that has the oddest shaped flower is the cockscomb. The flower reminds me of a piece of coral, he says. Cockscomb blossoms come in yellow, purple, red and pink. The dwarf type stays as small as six inches high, while the tall varieties can reach three feet tall. They grow best in full sun and do best in well-drained, organic-rich soil.

Another odd looking flower is Nigella, also known as “love-in-a-mist,” Goodspeed says. Most flowers are blue, although you can find white and pink in some mixes. The seed pods that form after the flowers fade resemble a distorted looking balloon. It is the seed pod which is used

in dried flower arrangements. Nigella seeds are generally planted directly into the garden and reseed for years to come. If you don't control them, you may find you have more than you want. A cool, part sun location is best for this flowering annual.

The cornflower has some of the most vivid blue flowers you will ever find, he says. They also come in red, white, mauve and pink. They are often mistaken for bachelor buttons because of their similarity. The different varieties range in height from six inches to two feet tall. This is another plant that can be direct seeded into the flower bed. Cornflowers also like cool, moist conditions.

When planning what flowers to plant this spring in your garden, consider leaving a little space for some everlastings, Goodspeed says. Then, next winter when the other flowering annuals are dead and composting, everlastings will be spreading color throughout your home.

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