



Blossoms Are Abundant This Year

by Marilyn Loser

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Our garden is looking particularly nice this June. Mild spring temperatures and abundant (for us) moisture have made it a pleasure to work in the yard. Many Alamosans have commented on how beautiful the lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*) are/were this year. All of my dark violet and white lilacs are done, but a clump of lavender colored ones are still going strong. Most of my lilacs were gifts from friends and I don't know the variety, but I do like that they don't all bloom at once – it extends the lilac season.

I'm not saddened by the passing of the lilacs as wild roses (*Rosa* ?) in red, yellow, and pink are in full bloom. Again, these are transplants. I only know the full name of the pink ones (*Rosa woodsia*). Many years ago I took some cuttings from bushes on Trout Creek Pass and they've spread to cover an area of about 50 sq. ft. The area is mulched with shredded bark and doesn't require a lot of water. The only hazard is occasionally having to snag an unwanted plastic bag or weed (kochia or salsify, mostly) without getting snagged.

The pink roses are in the same area as pink soapwort (*Saponaria ocymoides*), which is in full bloom; tiny white mat daisies (*Erigeron flagellaris*), almost done; and Golden Banner (*Thermopsis montana*), ceased blooming a couple of weeks ago. While the soapwort is native to Europe, the daisies and Golden Banner are native to Colorado. All are very cold hardy and do well in Alamosa soils with some additional water.

My wild red and yellow roses are very hardy, bloom only once a year, and are over six feet high. I do have a couple of hardy, red climbing roses (*Rosa 'Henry Kelsey'*) that bloom more frequently. However, they have fairly small blossoms. I admire people who are able to successfully raise less hardy, but gorgeous, roses such as Floribunda and Grandiflora types.

After gazing at the roses, my eyes are drawn to the many columbines (*Aquilegia*) that grace the yard. I haven't bought any new plants in many years – I just let them grow where ever they want. I've heard some say that you should pull up any yellow specimens as they will cross with other colors and all you'll have left is yellow columbines. I haven't had this happen; I continue to have a wide range of colors, including yellow. This year my favorite columbine is a dark rose color with a white center. Unfortunately, I stepped on it so had to pick it. I still find blue columbines (*Aquilegia caerulea*), Colorado's state flower, dotting the yard in spots where I never planted them.

In our small, woodshed garden there are two large columbines that are probably descendants of the "Giant McKenna" columbine variety I planted long ago. The blossoms are waist high (and no, I'm not down on my hands and knees when looking!) and are rose/pink with yellow centers. I used to have smaller red columbines (*Aquilegia Formosa*), but these have comingled with all the others and are now indistinguishable. I don't mind! I live in Colorado and I want columbines! Early in the season I deadhead a lot of them. As the blooms start tapering off later in the summer, I let seeds form and drop – they blow around and establish new plants.

Blue and pink penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*), natives to Colorado, are starting to bloom. Other dependable perennials that are blooming include Oriental poppies (*Papaver oriental*), pink thrift (*Armeria Maritima*), yellow oakleaf sedum (*Sedum ybridum*), Icelandic poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*), bleeding heart (*Cicentra spectabilis*), buttercups (*Ranunculus asiaticus*), and creeping baby's breath (*Gysophila repens 'alba'*). I'm mentioning all of these now as you may still be able to plant some this year.

I will discuss more of these hardy perennials, as well as reseeding annuals, in a later column. Take a look at AlamosaFlowers.net for images and information on these wonderful plants.

By the way, that wonderful rain that is making the flower so beautiful also delights the weeds. Oh, well!

"Sweet flowers are slow and weeds make haste." William Shakespeare: Duchess of York in Richard III