



Peak Time For Flowers

by Marilyn Loser

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It's been a month since I reported on our flower garden and the profusion of blossoms continues. I consider July to be the crescendo of the flower orchestration. In early spring small flowers close to the ground start poking up quietly: Bird's Eye Primrose (*Primula darialica*), Johnny Jump Ups (*Viola tricolor*), Reticulata Iris (*Iris reticulata*), and Scilla Bluebell (*Scilla siberica*).

By mid-July purple Clematis (*Clematis x jackmanii*) tower overhead on trellises shared with white blooming Silver Lace Vine (*Polygonum (fallopia) aubertii*). White, sky blue, and purple delphinium (*Delphinium* species) spikes are at their peak -- they're about five feet tall this year. I have them on the east side of a six-foot wood fence which helps protect them from our summer winds. Tall Purple Monk's Hood blooms are just starting to open next to them.

White Shasta Daisy clumps are sprinkled around the yard and range in height from six inches to three feet. There are still Columbines bobbing around here and there. I've deadheaded most Columbines hoping they will rebloom later in the season. A hardy red rose (*Rosa* ?) has been blooming profusely for the past month, but the petals are beginning to float away in the afternoon winds.

Our purple Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifoliosus*) shrub is displaying pink blossom clusters for the first time. I enjoy this plant, but am puzzled by it. I've had it for at least five years and it always dies back to the ground each year. I'd thought it would retain some hardwood over the winter. I wonder if this happens to anyone else in Alamosa.

Goat's Beard (*Aruncus dioicus*) has white feathery blooms that still look nice as they dry out. Another feathery white bloom is Queen of the Meadow (*Filipendula vulgaris kahome*) which spreads slowly. I dug out quite a bit earlier in the summer, gave some away, and transplanted some to several parts of the garden. The original clumps have partial shade and have some of the best soil and water in the yard. I'll be interested to see how the transplants fare in sunnier and drier beds. Yet another plant with white feathery blooms is Ash-leaf Spirea (*Sorbaria sorbifolia*). All of these white bloomers have done well and look wonderful next to more colorful blossoms.

Last year I divided my Blue Fleabane (*Erigeron 'Azure Fairy'* – a daisy looking flower) and it is doing well in a number of locations. I used to have a pink clump, but it died out some years ago and I haven't found a replacement. I'm a sucker for daisy type blooms.

Blue, Pink, and Magenta Penstemon (*Penstemon* species) are nearly done and I've been deadheading the blooms. Some of them will rebloom in the fall. I like to leave as much green leaf and stem as possible so the plants can continue to produce chlorophyll and nourish themselves – flowering takes a lot out of a plant!

I've been particularly impressed by the narrow garden between our house and sidewalk. It is bursting with Gloriosa Daisies (*Rudbeckia hirta*) right now. In past years I had more red specimens, but now they're almost all yellow. This garden has been in continual bloom since early spring with Daffodils, Creeping Phlox and Thyme starting the show. They were followed by Snow in Summer (*Cerastium tomentosum*) and Partridge Feather (*Tanacetum densum*). Want to know what's really wonderful about this garden? I haven't had to pull a single weed this year!

This is also the time when self-seeding flowers are in abundance. As I've mentioned in a previous column, I tend to let flowers grow where they choose -- unless they get in the way of a sprinkler or a preferred plant. Hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) of red, maroon, and pink are doing well. Shirley Poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) of red, white, and pink pop up in almost every garden bed. There's a continual bloom of Orange California Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*). Some plants get leggy or die off. I pull them out, but more sprout in their place.

Red Maltese Cross (*Lychnis chalconica*) and Blue Delphinium (*Delphinium grandiflorum* 'bl butterfly') are gentle reseederers and do well in a wide range of soil and water conditions.

I'll be holding a Flower Seed Harvest workshop in our garden on Saturday, August 8, at 10 pm. If you're interested in attending, please email me at Marilyn@AlamosaFlowers.net. This is part of Adams State University Nielsen Library's Seed to Seed program.

I'm in the process of updating photos and plants in the flower database at AlamosaFlowers.net, but it's so hard to keep up in the summer -- I'd rather be in the garden!

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." Marcus Tullius Cicero