



## Continual-, Re-, And Long-Blooming Flowers

by Marilyn Loser

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It's nearing the end of the flowering season in Alamosa and I'm reflecting on the summer. In my attempt to assess how my flower garden fared, I decided to place blooms into three categories. I'm making up my own definitions and the lines aren't clearly drawn. Continual-blooming flowers are those that keep blooming throughout the season once they start. Re-blooming flowers tend to be those that bloom a first time during the season and then re-bloom later or produce more blooms if the early spent blossoms are dead headed. Long-blooming flowers bloom once, but the individual blooms last a long time.

All but one of the continually blooming flowers I have are annuals. The best examples are wave petunias (*Petunia x ...*) and some of the other newer petunia varieties that don't even require dead heading to bloom profusely until the first medium-hard frost. This year I had excellent luck with yellow and orange gazanias (*Gazania*) in my hanging baskets. I love lapis-colored lobelia (*Lobelia erinus*) but have less success with them if I plant them in pots. They tend to become leggier and shaggier than when I used to plant them in my flower beds.

I see lots of yellow, orange, and red marigolds (*Tagetes*) around town that are looking lush right now. I don't often grow them so don't know how much dead heading they need.

Geraniums (*Geranium*) are actually perennials but don't winter over in Alamosa gardens. I have mine in pots and put them in our small indoor greenhouse during the winter. I like them to bloom in the dead of winter (love the color) and in early summer (before much else is providing color) so I time fertilizing and cutting them back so they will be at their best during these times.

Two months ago I posted a photo of a whiskey barrel full of petunias and geraniums on Facebook and received a comment saying, "A little on the bland side for your normal plantings." After laughing I posted that the barrel was in a hot spot and I wanted lots of color until it freezes. It's beautifully overflowing now. Easy, but not exotic!

As opposed to annuals making up the bulk of the continually blooming category, perennials are the re-bloomers in my yard. The most abundant are May night sage (*Salvia nemorosa*) and cinquefoil (*Potentilla*). After the first bloom of the sage, I cut the plants back to about five inches and most of them re-bloom in September. I don't deadhead the cinquefoil shrubs and after a first bloom they put on occasional blooms until late fall.

I have some success with re-blooming columbine. I cut most of mine back to about 12 inches in early August and some are blooming now. I had only one penstemon (*Penstemon*) re-bloom this year – I used

to have a lot. However, as I looked around my yard, I saw that phlox, Oriental poppies, and yarrow have replaced most of them. I love penstemon so will have work on restocking them next season.

In Albuquerque, NM, snapdragons are tender perennials. In Alamosa, I consider them an annual as I've never had them return. However, with deadheading, they re-bloom until we have a hard frost.

I'm not sure if gloriosa daisies (*Rudbeckia hirta*) or blanket flowers (*Gaillardia*) really re-bloom or just do better if deadheaded. If I dead head they bloom for a longer time. If I don't they dry up and I see the beginnings of blossoms that never matured -- I don't know if new blossoms develop after deadheading or if the plant just lasts longer so later blooms have a chance to mature. My gloriosa daisies have been blooming beautifully since the middle of July.

My best long blooming plant is white hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'). It's usually classified as a shrub, but since mine dies back to the ground each year, I think of it as a perennial. Its five- to six-inch wide blooms opened in mid-July and are still looking great. Sea lavender (*Limonium latifolium*), Globe thistle (*Echinops ritro*), and Paprika yarrow (*Achillea* 'Paprika') all bloom for at least a month.

Before I close, I think there is another category. I have a several annuals that reseed and/or germinate throughout during the season: California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), cosmos daisies (*cosmos*), and, to a more limited extent, Shirley poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*).

Check out photos of the blooms mentioned in this column by visiting [AlamosaFlowers.net](http://AlamosaFlowers.net). The website has photos of flowers in our Alamosa garden and it's not a commercial site so there are NO ads!

"When the world wearies and society fails to satisfy, there is always the garden." Minnie Aumonier