



It's Lavender and Yellow Perennial Time

by Marilyn Loser

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2012 August 15

It's that time of the year. Flower beds are bursting with yellow and lavender perennial blooms and there's a hint of fall in the cool morning air. Where has the summer gone? Consistent with the entire summer, my garden blooms are ahead of what I consider a normal schedule. I believe due to high temperatures and low precipitation. All the flowers discussed below are included on the AlamosaFlowers.net website.

Purple fall asters that usually bloom in late August are already blooming. Purple phlox and hollyhocks are just finishing. Bright golden gloriosa daisies have been welcoming visitors along the sunny sidewalk for more than a month and are still going strong. These are a relative of the native black-eyed-Susan that grace highways and byways across our country. They tend to have flourishes of red, are less scraggly than the natives, and are very hardy.

Another long-bloomer is the daisy-like, blue (almost purple) fleabane. It's in an area of our garden that gets some morning tree shade and is protected from the late afternoon sun. The clump has expanded nicely in the last few years. There are only a few new plants from seed – it doesn't seem to be taking over.

Sea lavender with its long arms of delicate, tiny blossoms waves in the afternoon breeze while sea holly, a smaller version of globe thistle stands rigid and alien looking. My sea lavender has not produced offspring, while the sea holly is a fairly aggressive reseeder. Established sea holly plants have a deep tap root so tolerate drought, but don't transplant well. They work well in dried arrangements. Drought tolerant, yellow cinquefoils (potentillas) continue to offer little spots of color and work well with sea holly.

I love yellow-blooming yarrows planted with lavender Russian Sage. The yarrow tends to bloom earlier than the sage in my garden, but holds its blossoms longer. It seems there are a lot of these well-behaved (read that "doesn't take over") yarrows on the market today. A good companion plant for both sage and yarrow is summer sun heliopsis – they make me think of a tall coreopsis. They bloom from mid-summer until fall. I used to tie them to a trellis, but the trellis is now shaded by a cottonwood and I've let them reseed wherever they're happy. I need to relocate the trellis to follow the wandering flowers.

Perhaps my favorite "gently reseeding" perennial is the blue butterfly (almost purple! - delphinium grandiflorum 'blue butterfly'). It grows 1 – 2 feet high. Much lower and softer than tall delphiniums that bloom for a shorter time in my garden and need staking.

A hardy chrysanthemum that I call “Veryl’s Mum” (*dendranthema ‘clara curtis’*) since Adams State’s long-time biology professor Very Keen gave me my starts is now blooming. It’s easy to transplant, doesn’t seem to have pests, and is full in August.

A few purple penstemons and May night sages that I dead-headed early in the season are making a comeback – never as flush as the first bloom. Also, some Missouri primroses are still producing. At this point in the season, I don’t dead-head them as I like their seeds to develop.

Purple stalks of fuzzy liatris are poking up and shade loving hostas are producing flourishes of purple blooms. Years ago, my garden was very sunny, so I’m loving adding hostas to shady areas produced by maturing trees.

Natives such as yellow *ratibida*, lavender perennial verbena, showy golden-eye, yellow blanket flower, purple harebells, and purple wild geraniums are still adding color to the garden. My original blue-mist spireas (really lavender) have died off and ones that reseeded themselves aren’t doing well as they choose dry areas in the yard. I hope to try transplanting some.

Even with our challenging climate, there’s a wide array of August yellow and lavender perennials that flourish in Alamosa! I listed 26 that I have blooming in my garden as I write. And rabbitbush and Santa Fe sunflowers haven’t started to bloom.

YARD WASTE NOTICE: You must now recycle yard waste at the 13th and Railroad facility in SE Alamosa. Please note that there are misleading signs! Drive north past the cardboard bin, look right, and you will see two piles. One has a sign that says branches, the other grass. I had weeds, stems, deadheaded flowers. A nice man indicated that these should go in the grass pile. I understand they want to dissuade folks from dumping old toilets and used mattresses, but I think better signage would help!

“Gardening is the art that uses flowers and plants as paint, and the soil and sky as canvas.” Elizabeth Murray