



Spring Flowers Are Just Popping

by Marilyn Loser

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My garden is waking up several weeks later than last year. High temperatures during the second half of March 2012 were mostly in the high 60's and low 70's compared to 2013's low 60's. And March low temperatures didn't plunge into negatives in 2012 as they did this year.

However, there are spots of color in the garden -- mostly "bend down" flowers are poking up. I call them this as they are very small so I have to bend down to get a good look. Miniature iris, purple *Iris reticulata* and multicolored *Iris histrioides* are popping up around the yard standing only 3 inches high. They are often the first flowers to show themselves in my yard. They're unusual in that the leaves show up only after the flower blooms.

I search out low-blooming spring bulbs since most of my garden gets a lot of wind. I love the delicate, six-petaled Chionodoxa. For the first time I have pure white ones blooming (*Chionodoxa luciliae* 'Alba'). I have a few blue and purple species also. Nodding Scilla bluebells are poking through the litter of last year's leaves. A couple of crocuses made a quick appearance and faded away -- I hope more are to come.

I've had a few 3-4 inch high red tulips bloom and several other low varieties have buds. My 'Alamosa' hyacinths are blooming pink and purple. I call them 'Alamosa' as they grow only 2-4 inches tall year after year. There not voluptuous like greenhouse specimens found in the supermarket.

Miniature (4 inch high) daffodils opened up just this week. On the taller side, I've had 10 inch high white and orange jonquils blooming for a couple of weeks.

All of the above-mentioned flowers are fall-planted bulbs.

Lavender creeping phlox is beginning to form a blanket of color around the jonquils and daffodils. Pink phlox will bloom a bit later. The lavender variety is the hardiest. In the xeric garden, wild Golden Banner (*Thermopsis Montana*) is just starting to bloom. I love its bright yellow, lupine-like racemes that range in height between 6 and 12 inches.

During this time of the year when the wind is blowing and summer blooms only a dream, I love to have containers of flowers on the porch. Our porch isn't heated, but cold tolerant flowers like pansies and California poppies do just fine. In fact, for the first time, I purchased some pink California poppies while I was in Albuquerque last week. I'll let them go to seed and see if they'll make it in my yard. The yellow-orange California poppies do very well here and are happy to reseed. In fact, none that I have now are

where I originally planted them. My garden is not very formal and I like it (mostly) when flowers find a place where they're happy!

Please check out AlamosaFlowers.net for images and information regarding our garden. I'm in the process of updating the flower index.

I buy many of my plants from our local garden centers (Green Spot, North River Greenhouse, La Garita Mtn Nursery, and Catlins). However, they're not up and running with flowers early in the spring so for years I've gone to Santa Fe Greenhouses. Sadly, when I showed up at the Albuquerque branch last week to purchase pansies, the billboard said "Jericho Nursery". David Salman closed his business citing the ongoing drought and slow economy. I learned a lot from his winter lecture series and I applaud his contributions to waterwise gardening. Apparently, he will now work for the firm that will continue the High Country Gardens mail order business. By the way, the folks at Jericho Nursery were very friendly and knowledgeable.

Since I'm retired I have the luxury of picking my days in the garden. I've been cutting the dead stalks from last year's plants, gathering the leaves I leave on the garden beds over the winter, and scooping up deer poop. Guess which activity I hate?

Don't know about you, but I have unwanted grass greening up in my flower beds as well as a hard-to-kill weed that I don't know the name of. I do use a glyphosate concentrate to get rid of these before my desired plants start greening up. I know glyphosate is controversial and I don't use it in my vegetable garden.

SOIL PRODUCTS: On the brighter side, are you looking to improve your soil? For a limited time, Alamosa Boy Scout Troop 307 is again selling soil products to raise money for their activities. If you're interested, contact the troop at 589-6527. Please leave your contact information and address. They'll deliver and stack in Alamosa!

"And then my heart with pleasure fills. And dances with daffodils." *William Wordsworth*