



## It's Flower Time

by Marilyn Loser

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Yahoo! Alamosa is starting to flower. Many of the beautiful crabapple blossoms have faded, but sweet smelling lilacs and fragrant Canada Red Chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) trees are in full bloom in my garden.

Early blooming groundcovers provide most of the garden color right now. Dark pink, creeping Phlox (*Phlox stolonifera*) next to Snow in Summer's (*Cerastium tomentosum*) white flowers and bluish leaves is a favorite combination. Lavender Veronica (*Veronica oltensis*) weaves a trail through flagstones and a fringy yellow specimen is perky in the rock garden. I don't know what the yellow flower is! I have a photo on AlamosaFlowers.net website; I'd be grateful if someone could identify it for me (email me: Marilyn@AlamosaFlowers.net).

My single, "road kill" light blue Iris are blooming. I call them this as I snatched them from the edge of Hwy 160 just before the bulldozers tore up the road when the highway was widened quite a few years ago. Yellow and orange Icelandic Poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*) wave in the morning breeze, dotting the yard. For some reason, these aren't reseeding as well as they did in the past. My first California Poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*) of the season are opening up. I love their clear orange color. As I mentioned in a previous article, none of these grow where I originally planted them, but I allow them to grow almost anywhere in the yard. If you don't care for nomadic flowers, this may not be the plant for you.

I love white Meadow Anemones (*Anemone canadensis*). They've spread to fill an area that is part shady. The delicate blossoms belie their cold hardiness – they're often the first non-bulb flowers to bloom in my garden. I don't think too many people know about this charmer. Low, white Alpine Asters (*Aster* ?) are opening in the sunniest spots. One advantage of the above two flowers are that they form fairly dense mats that don't allow weeds to get a start. I rarely have to weed either one.

Petite Buttercups (*Ranunculus asiaticus*) stand 6-12 inches above their low mat of leaves. These Buttercups are fairly well-behaved and don't take over as do the creeping, invasive Buttercups (*Ranunculus plentiflorus*) I have.

Another early white flower is Lily of the Valley (*Convallaria majalis*). Unlike many photos I see with the flowers towering over the leaves, my flowers are largely hidden by the vegetation. These delicate blooms have a lovey scent. But, be aware that they are very poisonous and can spread to form extensive colonies.

It's also the time of the year when the purples of Flax (*Linum Lewisii*) and Chives (*Allium schoeno*) dance in the garden. Flax petals typically drop by afternoon around here. I've found if I cut them back after their first blooming period of several weeks, they rebloom later in the summer. Neither of these flowers is

good in bouquets. Flax drops its petals too early and Chives leave people with twitching noses due to the powerful scent.

I can't forget the beautiful red and white Bleeding Heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*). Sadly, I'm down to one plant. I suspect that I haven't been diligent enough keeping encroaching plants away from them and they just couldn't compete.

Red and white columbines (*Aquilegia*) are just opening up. I haven't spotted any blue buds of our state flower yet this year.

I've planted my hanging baskets and almost daily take them down to protect them from our afternoon winds. I do like coconut-lined, wrought iron baskets but find they dry out pretty quickly. Fortunately, a friend told me about planter 'diapers' which absorb water and keep the baskets wetter longer. I now buy the material a roll at a time.

I've just started planting annuals (petunias and verbena mostly) in the ground. I have my fingers crossed as nightly temperatures are still hovering around freezing. Once again, I'll plant nasturtiums in large pots at least a foot above ground to protect them from chilly night temperatures that flow at ground level.

I hope your gardening is as enjoyable as mine! You can find photos of all the flowers mentioned in this article at [AlamosaFlowers.net](http://AlamosaFlowers.net). The photos were taken in our garden – they're not catalogue images.

*"When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else. Most people in the city rush around so, they have no time to look at a flower. I want them to see it whether they want to or not."* Georgia O'Keefe