

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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Flowers to Grow for Fresh Floral Bouquets from Your Garden
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A fresh floral arrangement is enjoyed during special events. Make every day special by using fresh cut flowers from the garden in arrangements for the table. I learned this from my mother. Even dad appreciates the flowers. Easy to grow flowering annuals are available throughout the growing seasons to use in beautiful bouquets.

Zinnias (*Zinnia elegans*) provide many round flower heads which range in size from 1.5 to 6 inches across, depending on the cultivar. They last well in an arrangement. 'Cut and Come Again' and 'Oklahoma' have small flowers which are great to use as fillers. 'State Fair' and 'Giant Cactus' have large flowers which serve as focal points in an arrangement. Flower colors range from tints and tones of red, pink, yellow, chartreuse, white, coral, and orange. White zinnias blend well with other flower colors. Zinnias grow best in full sun. To have them throughout the season, stagger several plantings. After the plants begin to look old and tired, remove them from the garden. Harvest fresh flowers from the next planting.

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) is an annual for full sun with 2- to 4-inch wide flowers. The center is usually brown or black, except for the cultivars like 'Prairie Sun' and

‘Irish Spring’, which have a green center. Petal colors range from yellow to gold to orange, and bicolored with mahogany added. ‘Indian Summer’ has beautiful 6-inch wide flowers and plants reaching 24 to 36 inches tall.

Lace cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*) flowers are simple and pretty. The blossoms are 2 to 3 inches wide. Flower color varies with the cultivar, but may include white, pink, carmine, and rose-red. Some cultivars are bicolor with magenta and white. All of them have yellow centers. Cultivars are also available with multiple rows of petals called double and semi-double blossoms.

The lace cosmos has very fine narrow leaves. The plants may reach 18 inches to 3 feet tall. This species produces long stems which make the flower easier to use in arrangements. The cosmos plant will bloom all season long. Full sun is required for best performance.

Global amaranth (*Gomphrena*) has a spectacular flower that can be used fresh or dried. The 1- to 1.5-inch, globe-shaped flowers are nice accents and fillers in an arrangement. Many branches are formed on the plant, so the flowers may be arranged in groups. The flower colors include purple, pink, white, red and white, and rose bicolor.

The plant height of globe amaranth varies from 18 to 32 inches tall, depending on the cultivar. The plants will bloom in the heat and through drought conditions. Full sun and well-drained soil is important for this plant.

Sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*) always bring a smile. Colors include yellow, golden yellow, light yellow, red, and bronze. Flower size of 4 to 8 inches across can be found, depending on the cultivar. Well-branched plants help to supply flowers for several weeks.

Sunflowers grow best in full sun and well drained soil. Depending on the cultivar, plant height ranges from 4 to 8 feet. If the pollen from sunflowers is too messy for the table, select

pollenless cultivars. ‘Double Dandy’, with its double red flowers, is pollen-free. ‘Sunbright’ has golden yellow, 4-inch, pollenless flowers.

The upright, spike-shaped flowers of the plume or feathery celosia (*Celosia argentea plumosa*) add height and another shape to an arrangement. Flower colors include cream, orange, red, and yellow. The plumes can reach up to 13 inches long. ‘Celosia Fresh Look’ is available with red or yellow flowers. ‘Celosia Asian Garden’ has upright thin, pink blooms. Celosia prefers full sun and well-drained soil. It is easy to grow from seed in the garden and takes little care.

Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*) has a tall spike filled with little 1-to-2-inch flowers that children like to hold on the sides and squeeze together to make them snap or open and close. The flower colors include red, pink, rose, scarlet, yellow, orange, violet, purple, orchid, and white.

Plant height of snapdragon ranges from 8 to 30 inches tall including the flower spike. The taller cultivars will need staking to hold the flower spikes up. Snapdragon is a cool season flower so look for heat tolerant cultivars. Otherwise, grow them in the early spring or starting in August for fall flowering.

Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), used as a filler, adds color if using a cultivar like ‘Purple Ruffles’. The leaves are dark purple. The flowers, which are pink, can be used, but the foliage is the main reason to use this basil. The plant reaches 18 to 24 inches tall. It grows in full sun and requires well-drained soil. Green basil can be used as well as a filler.

When arranging cut flowers, do not submerge foliage attached to the flower stems in water inside the vase. These leaves will start to decay, encouraging microbial growth in the vase which shortens the life of the flowers. Remove these leaves. It is best to use a flower preservative in the water. This material provides food for the flowers and preservatives that

inhibit bacteria and fungi. Change the water frequently. Aspirin or copper pennies placed in the vase water do not extend the life of the flowers.

For more information about growing cut flowers, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at (270) 685-8480 or annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu.

Annette's Tip:

Flowers from many different perennials produce nice cut flowers but the length of time they bloom is limited.

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