

MESSENGER-INQUIRER



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Blue Flower Color Adds Calmness to the Garden Annette Meyer Heisdorffer, Ph.D.

During March Madness, the color blue is exciting for UK fans, but in the garden, blue conveys a feeling of calmness. Flowering plants with blue flowers are not common, but there are several perennials and annuals available with blue or hints and tones of blue to enjoy in your garden.

False indigo (*Baptisia australis*) grows erect with stalks of blue, lupine-like flowers in the spring. After the flower has faded, the seed pod becomes an inflated charcoal black seed capsule. The pods are desirable to use in dried flower arrangements. This perennial plant was used by early Americans as a substitute for true indigo in making blue dyes. Use it as a specimen plant to display its clover-like, blue-green leaves. False indigo prefers full sun.

'Johnson's Blue' Geranium (*Geranium*) forms a spreading mound about 12 inches in height and spreads 24-30 inches wide. The blue flowers appear in late spring to early summer. This perennial prefers morning sun and afternoon shade. It grows best in well-drained, moist soil.

'May Night' (Mainacht) meadow sage (*Salvia X superba* or *Salvia nemerosa*) has deep violet-blue flowers produced on a stalk. The perennial plant reaches 18 inches tall. It blooms in

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late spring and throughout the summer if spent flower heads are removed. It prefers well-drained soil and full sun. ‘May Night’ tolerates heat and drought conditions.

‘Best Bet’ tall bearded iris (*Iris germanica*) blooms in the spring and may rebloom in the fall. The large flowers have light blue standards, which are upright petals, and dark blue falls which are downward bending petals. It prefers to grow in well-drained soil and full sun. This perennial plant reaches 16 to 18 inches wide and 30 to 40 inches in height with the flower stem included.

Plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*) is a low-growing 10-inch tall perennial. It has a central crown which makes it ideal for a ground cover helping to manage and control erosion in small areas. Morning sun and afternoon shade show off the marine blue, phlox-like flowers. It blooms in late summer through the fall. The foliage becomes a beautiful bronze red in the fall. This plant needs well-drained soil.

Blue My Mind® *Evolvulus* hybrid has silver-green foliage with blue flowers throughout the summer. The attractive annual reaches 6 to 12 inches in height and spreads up to 24 inches. This easy to care for annual is best grown in hanging baskets or containers. It prefers full sun and tolerates heat.

Surfina® Sky Blue *Petunia* hybrid has beautiful sky blue flowers with a hint of lavender. The fast-growing plant reaches 6 to 10 inches in height and spreads 8 to 10 inches. This annual plant is heat tolerant and a beautiful addition to patio pots. The flowers do not need to be removed after blooming to keep the plant looking nice.

Evening Scentsation™ *Petunia* (*Petunia x atkinsiana*) has indigo blue flowers that are fragrant with hints of hyacinth, honey, and rose. The fragrance becomes more noticeable in the

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afternoon and evening. This annual blooms throughout the growing season. The plant reaches 5 – 8 inches tall and 30 to 35 inches wide. It prefers a moist, well-drained soil.

The summer snapdragon, Angelface® Dresden Blue *Angelonia angustifolia* hybrid grows from 18 to 24 inches tall and spreads 18 to 24 inches wide. The lavender-blue, 1-inch flowers are bicolor with a single white, angel-shaped petal on the downside. Flowers are produced on spikes. This annual flowers all summer long with little care. Deadheading the old flower stalks is not necessary. It prefers to grow in full sun, well-drained soil, and tolerates the summer heat.

Whirlwind® Blue fan flower *Scaevola* hybrid is a really tough plant that thrives in a hot, humid climate and can withstand wind. The blue-purple, fan-shaped flower blooms throughout the summer. The unique bloom looks very good in hanging baskets or window boxes. This annual reaches a height of 8-12 inches tall and spreads 24 inches. It is heat and drought tolerant too.

Mealycup sage (*Salvia farinacea*) is an annual in our area and can reseed itself and come up next year. ‘Fairy Queen’ has dark blue and white bicolor flowers on spikes. The plant reaches 18 inches in height and 14 inches in width. ‘Victoria’ has deep violet-blue to deep blue flowers. The plants are compact, reaching 16 to 18 inches tall. They grow best in full sun and tolerate heat and drought. The flower spikes can be cut and used in fresh arrangements. Butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the blossoms.

Summer Wave® Large Blue *Torenia* hybrid grows best in the shade to partial shade. The large tubular shaped flowers are two-toned with darker blue and lighter blue petals. The carefree annual plant is covered with flowers all summer. The plant reaches 8 to 10 inches tall and 10 to 12 inches wide. Plant it in containers or in the ground.

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For more information about plants with blue flowers, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480.

Annette's Tips:

To find the plants mentioned above, look locally first at nurseries and garden centers in April and then check catalogs and websites of different companies. Also, watch plant sales held by garden clubs, societies, and the Western Kentucky Botanical Garden.

March 17-23 is National Ag Week to celebrate the agricultural industry and the role it plays in our economy. The latest agriculture statistics for Kentucky are available at <https://www.kyagr.com/ky-agnews/press-releases/2024/US-Census-of-Agriculture-shows-growth-for-Kentucky-agricultural-products.html>.

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