

# Colorful Plants that Keep on Giving

by Dr. William C. Welch, Professor & Landscape Horticulturist  
Texas AgriLife Extension Service

As winter turns into spring and early summer my garden starts to fill its vacant places with reseeded annuals and perennials that make March, April and May the most extravagantly colorful time of the year. It almost seems like a miracle that it happens so quickly. The moist soils, warmer temperatures and longer days contribute to this show that lasts till really hot weather slows it down.

There is something special about reseeded annuals that like your garden so much that they return each year. Top of that list are petunias. My favorite is 'Laura Bush' a Greg Grant introduction that continues to be a personal favorite. Dr. Dan Lineburger, Professor of Horticulture here at Texas A&M and his students grew a crop of tissue cultured ones that were offered at the student plant sale this spring. It was interesting to compare them to the ones that reseed from years past. I also have common old fashion petunias and seedlings from some of the 'Wave' series that also come back. They are mostly pinks and purples, but quite a few whites and even some striped ones occur. The fragrance is a major reason to have them. These seedlings are more heat tolerant than most of the hybrids I have tried. They come up around other plants in my pots as well as in the cracks in the pavement!



Mixture of Byzantine gladiolus, snapdragons, red cabbage, dianthus and other spring flowers



Spring border of old-fashioned petunias and blue larkspur

The round, tubular flowers of the petunias are contrasted with spikes of blue, white and pink larkspur that also reseed prolifically. They come up in such large numbers that thinning is necessary for them to develop properly. Their spikes contrast so nicely with the petunias and the masses of perennial yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). This magenta colored one was a gift many years ago from the late Mattie Rosprim, a generous College Station gardener who loved to share. Seedlings of flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana sylvestris*) reach 3-4' tall and are usually white although lavender and purple ones are also there. Flowering tobacco is usu-

---

ally an annual for me but occasionally they live for two years. It doesn't really matter since they, too, are very prolific in my garden. Other Greg Grant's introductions are Salvia 'Henry Duelberg' and the white form 'Augusta Duelberg' which are also perennials that reseed for me. They are very vigorous and have 12-16" spikes of blue-purple (Henry) or white (Augusta) from spring till frost. Cutting these salvias back every couple of months is necessary to keep them neat.



Oxeye daisy (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*) is yet another perennial that reseeds well for me. The pure white petals and yellow centers contrast so nicely with the spikes of the salvias and larkspur. I just made a pass in the 'upper' border across the back of my house cutting back faded blooms of snapdragons, oxeye daisies, Byzantine gladiolus and roses. My three types of garden mums ('Country Girl' is the only one that has a 'real' name), are growing so vigorously that I cut them back from a foot or so tall to 4 or 5 inches. I may need to do that again before late summer to keep them in bounds. It is a good time to divide them or start cuttings from their

tips. The border looks much neater after the 'grooming'.



Flowering Tobacco  
(above)



Henry Duelberg  
(above)

Augusta Duelberg  
(right)

