

August is a challenging month for gardeners. July's daylilies are finished blooming, the weather can be unbearably hot, and August-blooming plants can be hard to find.

#### *What is a gardener to do?*

One option is simply to wait with anxious anticipation for September's show of mums and asters. A more proactive approach, however, is to seek solutions in garden books and magazines and at botanical gardens, garden centers, nurseries, demonstration gardens, and neighbors' flower beds.

The following choices represent some of the best August has to offer to gardeners in zones 4 and 5. All listed plants have been proven performers in Iowa and Nebraska gardens.

### **Annuals and Biennials**

Annuals and biennials are known for their long blooming period, often carrying the garden through the color-challenged doldrums of August. The particular appeal of the following annuals and biennials is that they readily self-sow, saving the gardener from extra work.

#### ***Angelica gigas*, Korean angelica**

Korean angelica grows 2 to 4 feet high and blooms in late August. This biennial has deeply cut foliage, wine purple flowers, and is an excellent choice for partial shade. Allow the seeds to fully develop on the plant if you want future seedlings.



#### ***Cleome spinosa*, spider flower**

This 3- to 4-foot tall annual continues to produce airy flowers until the first hard freeze. Take advantage of the plant's height by placing it at the back of the border. Flower color choices include shades of white, pink, lavender, or red. The tubular seedpods split open, sowing seeds in a wide area.

#### ***Ipomoea* 'Grandpa Ott', Grandpa Ott morning glory**

Morning glory is an annual vine that can climb to 12 feet in height, so give it a tall support. Grandpa Ott morning glory will bloom throughout August. Each trumpet-shaped flower is dark purple with a dark pink throat. This heirloom variety played an integral role in the formation of Seed Savers Exchange of Decorah, Iowa.



#### ***Ipomopsis aggregata*, scarlet rocket**

Scarlet rocket sends up 3- to 4-foot tall spikes of red flowers throughout August. It is a biennial but gardeners can encourage yearly flowering by sowing seeds for two successive years. Once established, they will readily self-sow.

#### ***Talinum paniculatum*, Jewel of Opar**

This annual ranges from 15 to 18 inches in height. Delicate pink flowers appear throughout August. Jewel of Opar has waxy leaves and, as an added bonus, round red seed heads that ripen to black, making it a good choice for dried flower arrangements.



#### ***Verbena bonariensis*, Brazilian verbena**

This annual is 2 to 3 feet tall, making it very different from other ground-hugging verbenas. Tiny lavender flowers arranged in

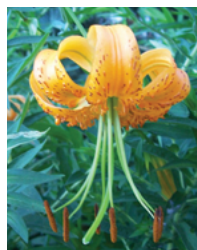
large clusters appear throughout August. Strong stems also make it a good cut flower. The tall, airy nature of this plant gives it a see-through quality that makes it useful in any part of the garden border. For best results, sow seeds directly where plants are wanted—starting them indoors is difficult and they often don't survive transplanting.

## Bulbs

Bulbs often are associated with spring bloom; however these showy beauties are unfazed by August heat. The first three are perennials.

### ***Liatris*, gayfeather**

Sizes range from 18 inches (*Liatris microcephala*) to 4 feet (*L. pycnostachya*). For August-blooming gayfeathers, look specifically for *L. ligulistylis*, *L. microcephala*, *L. punctata*, and *L. pycnostachya*. A garden favorite is *L. pycnostachya* 'Eureka', which produces dense red-purple spikes that bloom in early to mid-August.



### ***Lilium*, lily**

Henry's lily, *Lilium henryi*, grows to 4 feet, producing light orange flowers in early to mid-August. Tiger lily, *L. tigrinum*, is 5 feet tall and has brown-speckled orange flowers in early to mid-August. Oriental lily, *L. orientale* is 2 to 3 feet tall and comes in an

array of pinks, reds, and whites, blooming in early to mid-August. The species lilies, *L. speciosum* 'Rubrum' and 'Album', grow to 4 feet, blooming red and white, respectively, in late August. All should be planted in well drained soil.

### ***Lycoris squamigera*, surprise lily, naked lady**

Besides the surprising common name, this plant is astonishing for its 24-inch tall flower stalk arising from a leafless base in mid-August. The leaves appear in early spring, then disappear—which can give the pink flowers a lonely look. If desired, put other foliage plants around the base.

### ***Ornithogalum saundersiae*, giant chinchinchee**

Wide, strap-like leaves anchor these 5-foot tall flowering stalks with their 1-inch, cream-colored flowers for a stunning display throughout August. The tender bulbs must be dug after the first light frost. Allow them to dry on a single layer of newspaper for one week, then store bulbs in a cool dry place. Plant in spring after all danger of frost is past.

## Perennials

Perennials are a garden mainstay because of their big, showy displays of color that repeat from year to year. Some bloom all month, while others are best during the beginning, middle, or end of August.



### ***Agastache*, hyssop**

Sunset hyssop, *Agastache rupestris*, reaches a height of 18 to 24 inches and boasts gray-green foliage and bicolored flowers of orange and lavender. Ava hyssop (*Agastache* 'Ava') has raspberry red flowers on top

of 3- to 4-foot tall stems. Both are desert plants that bloom throughout August. Hyssop can be short-lived, especially when winter delivers a heavy snow load. Plants generally self-sow enough to provide repeat flowers without becoming too aggressive.



### ***Belamcanda chinensis*, blackberry lily**

Strong 2- to 3-foot tall stems arise from the iris-like foliage in early August. The 6-petaled orange flowers are spotted with maroon. Seeds are black beads that nature has cleverly

clustered to imitate blackberries; they work well in dried arrangements.

### ***Chelone lyonii*, turtlehead**

Turtlehead has hot pink flowers in mid-August on plants 2- to 3-feet tall. It does very well in shade to partial shade.

### ***Conoclinium coelestinum* (formerly *Eupatorium coelestinum*), hardy ageratum**

Plants are 2 to 3 feet tall and will slowly colonize an area. Lavender, tassel-shaped flowers appear in late August. The stems are darker colored, making them a nice contrast for the flowers and foliage.

### ***Epilobium flescheri*, alpine willowherb**

Delicate pink flowers appear in late August over gray-green, 18-inch tall foliage. The common name implies a preference for rock gardens, however, alpine willowherb does very well in a sunny flower border.

**Gaillardia aristata, blanket flower**

Depending on the cultivar, blanket flower ranges from 12 to 24 inches in height. Plants bloom throughout August. Fuzzy foliage, daisy-type flowers, and colors ranging in the oranges and reds give gardeners several choices. Plants can be short-lived; however, removing all flowers and buds after October 1 can extend their longevity by helping the plant to harden off before winter.

**Geranium ‘Rozanne’, Rozanne cranesbill**

This 2008 Perennial Plant of the Year has deeply cut foliage and lavender-blue flowers with dark stamens throughout August. Plants are 12 to 18 inches tall and do well in shade to partial shade.

**Helenium, sneezeweed, Helen’s flower**

The tall (to 30 inches) and upright form of this plant makes it a good choice in the back of the border. Flowers appear in July through August. ‘Rubinzweg’ (burnt red flowers) and ‘Wyndley’ (yellow flowers) are two of the best cultivars.

**Helianthus ‘Lemon Queen’, Lemon Queen perennial sunflower**

This 6-foot showstopper is a highlight in the late August garden. Flowers of this cultivar are light yellow, making them distinctly different from the golden yellow usually associated with *Helianthus*.



**Heliopsis helianthoides ‘Prairie Sunset’ and ‘Summer Nights’**

These native plants produce golden yellow daisies on plants that are 4 feet and taller. Both ‘Prairie Sunset’ and ‘Summer Nights’ begin blooming in July and continue prolifically through August. ‘Prairie Sunset’ has a reddish halo around the central flower cone and dark red stems. ‘Summer Nights’ also has dark red stems and a mahogany-colored flower cone.

**Hemerocallis, daylily**

In numbers alone, the daylily contributes the widest selection of cultivars for the August garden. Catalog advice can be hit-or-miss in identifying late bloomers. The following list includes daylilies that have proven their worth but is by no means exhaustive.

**‘Artist Etching’**—Plants are 26 inches tall and have 3-inch-wide, peach-colored flowers in early to mid-August. Well-established plants can produce 18 or more stalks.

**‘Bengaleer’**—Three-foot-tall stalks hold 6-inch flowers of orange-gold in early to mid-August.

**‘Challenger’**—Released in 1949, this daylily has stood the test of time with 4-foot tall stems and 4½-inch medium red flowers in mid-August.



**‘Chicago Apache’**—

Five-inch red flowers appear on 27-inch stalks in mid-August.



**‘Clincher’**—

Stems reach 32 inches and carry 7½-inch, lavender-pink flowers with the strongest flowering occurring in early August.

**‘Happy Returns’**—After blooming early in the season, this 18-inch tall plant produces 3-inch, light yellow flowers again in late August.



**‘Heirloom Heaven’**—

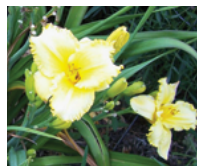
This narrow-petaled daylily produces 26-inch flower stalks and 4½-inch red flowers with a hint of orange in mid-August.



**‘Jen Melon’**—

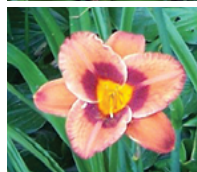
Plants produce 26-inch stalks and 5-inch, melon-gold ruffled flowers in mid- to late August.

**‘Jersey Spider’**—Stems are 36 inches tall and have 8-inch, orange-gold, narrow-petaled flowers in mid-August.



**‘Leonides’**—

Plants are 24 inches tall and produce 5-inch ruffled yellow flowers with white midribs in late August.



**‘Mighty Chestnut’**—

Plants are 30 inches tall and have 5½-inch flowers of chestnut orange with a burgundy center from early to mid-August.

**'Nanuq'**—Five-inch white flowers appear on 27-inch tall stems in early August.



**'Pretty Late'**—

This narrow-petaled daylily is 36 inches tall and produces 6-inch, mahogany red flowers with yellow midribs in late August.



**'Pumpkin Time'**—

Plants produce 32-inch stalks topped by 5-inch brilliant orange flowers throughout August and continuing until frost.



**'Queen's Navy'**—

Lavender-blend flowers with green throats begin to appear on 24-inch stems in July and continue through early August.



**'Regale Finale'**—

The 26-inch tall stems hold 6-inch purple flowers with a wide yellow eye in mid-August.



**'Ruffled Cream Radiance'**—

Plants have 26-inch stems and 5½-inch flowers of creamy peach in early to mid-August.

**'Time Marches On'**—Stems are 33 inches tall and bear 6-inch, light yellow flowers in mid-August.



**'Wayside Burnt Auburn'**—

Plants are 28 inches tall and have 6-inch flowers of burnt orange with gold eyes in early to mid-August.

**'Yellow Cascade'**—Plants are 26 inches tall and produce 5½-inch ruffled flowers of lemon yellow in early August.



**'Yuma'**—

Plants grow to 25 inches and produce 6-inch yellow flowers with a bronze overlay in early August.

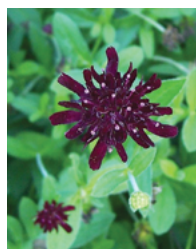
**'Zella Virginia'**—Stems grow to 24 inches and produce 5½-inch, double, melon-colored flowers in early August.



***Hibiscus moscheutos*, rose mallow**

Depending on the cultivar, rose mallows range from 12 inches to 5 feet in height. Flowers appear in mid- to late August in red, burgundy, white, pink, or lavender, often with a contrasting center. 'Pink Clouds'

performs particularly well.

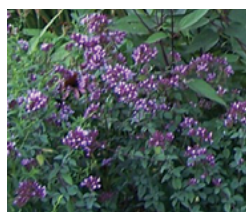


***Knautia macedonica***

Plants form a mound 18 inches high and 24 inches across. This underused plant produces 1-inch, maroon, pincushion-like flowers from July to frost with the strongest flowering in mid-August.

***Leucanthemum* 'Becky'**

This 2003 Perennial Plant of the Year grows 3 feet tall and produces white daisies with cheerful yellow centers from July to early August.



***Origanum*, ornamental oregano**

'Rotkugel' performs especially well, growing 24 inches tall and producing loads of lavender flowers throughout August. It tolerates heat well. All of the

oreganos can be sensitive to wet conditions and should be planted in a dry, sunny location.



***Patrinia scabiosifolia*, patrinia**

Tiny, sulfur-yellow flowers are clustered on 3-foot tall stems and give a steady show throughout August. The cultivar 'Nagoya' is a compact, 20-inch tall choice. Patrinia is a great plant and definitely underused.



***Perovskia atriplicifolia*, Russian sage**

This popular (and possibly overused) choice produces 3- to 5-foot tall spikes of pale lavender flowers over gray-green foliage throughout August. Plants can be invasive, sending suckers up from the base in increasingly larger circles

***Persicaria amplexicaulis* 'Firetail'**

Although a perennial, the dimensions of this plant give it the presence of a small shrub, reaching 3 to 4 feet in height and width. Spikes of red flowers appear throughout August.



***Phlox paniculata*, garden phlox**

Depending on the cultivar, garden phlox ranges from 24 to 48 inches in height. Flowering begins in July and continues through early August. Some of the most mildew-resistant cultivars are: 'David' (white flowers, 2002 Perennial Plant of the Year), 'Laura' (lavender with a white eye), 'Eva Cullum' (pink with a red eye), 'Nicky' (purple), and 'Robert Poore' (lavender). Spider mites and phlox plant bug can be a problem during dry periods; if necessary, treat the undersides of leaves with an insecticidal soap.

***Platycodon grandiflora*, balloon flower**

Balloon flower has a broad range of plant heights, depending on the cultivar—'Sentimental Blue' is 8 inches tall, 'Mariesii' grows to 16 inches, and 'Komachi' and 'Double White' are 24 inches tall. In early August, the balloon-shaped buds open to 5-petaled, violet-blue, white, or pink flowers. The buds of 'Komachi' never open, retaining their delightful balloon appearance.



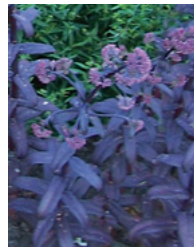
***Ratibida pinnata*, gray-headed coneflower**

This native grows to 5 feet, producing yellow ray flowers around a tall central cone in early to mid-August. The petals droop, giving the flower the appearance of a shuttlecock. It is a great cut flower and does well in full sun with little irrigation.



***Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm', Goldsturm coneflower**

While both the annual and perennial forms of *Rudbeckia* are good additions to the August garden, 'Goldsturm' sets the standard for performance and was the 1999 Perennial Plant of the Year. It reaches 24 inches in height and produces deep yellow flowers throughout August.

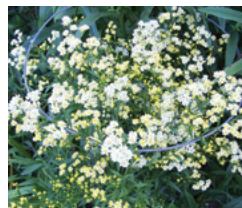


***Sedum*, stonecrop, live-forever**

The cultivars 'Matrona', 'Autumn Joy', 'Lynda Windsor', and 'Purple Emperor' grow to 18 inches, beginning their bloom cycle in late August. Succulent leaves give rise to white, pink, red, or mahogany flowers. 'Purple Emperor' and 'Lynda Windsor' have dark purple foliage.

***Solidago rigida*, stiff goldenrod**

Large leaves, tall stems (to 5 feet), and big flat clusters of yellow flowers make this plant a standout. Most goldenrods produce their flowers during September and October but stiff goldenrod is a reliable late August-blooming perennial.



**X *Solidaster luteus*, solidaster**

Plants are short (18 to 20 inches) and bear tiny, lemon-yellow flowers in mid-August. The name reflects its parentage as a cross between aster and goldenrod.

Flowers are produced in clusters, giving a charmingly airy effect.



***Veronica* 'Eveline', Eveline speedwell**

The cultivar 'Eveline' has lavender-pink flowers on top of 18-inch stems during mid-August without the problem of powdery mildew. Removing spent flowers improves the overall appearance.

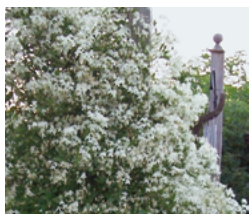
**Woody Ornamentals**

Considered the backbone of the garden, woody ornamentals usually put on their floral display in spring. However, the following shrubs and vines provide a welcome contribution to the August garden.

**Clematis**

***Clematis heracleifolia*, tube clematis**—This shrubby plant grows to 3 feet and produces blue-purple tubular flowers with recurved petals throughout August.

***C. pitcheri*, pitcher clematis**—The stems vine to 8 feet and bear delicate lavender bells with the strongest show in early August followed by sporadic blooming through the rest of the month.



***C. terniflora*, sweet autumn clematis—Easily climbing** to 20 feet, this species shows genetic variation with flowering periods from mid-August to early September. The abundant white

flowers give an overall effect of a fluffy white cloud, followed by attractive seed heads.

### ***Clethra alnifolia*, summersweet clethra**

This 4- to 5-foot tall shrub bears white flower spikes from early to mid-August. Its smaller size helps it fit nicely into the perennial border where it can be planted in full sun to part shade. An added bonus is the golden leaf color in the fall.



### ***Hydrangea 'Tardiva'***

When in bloom, this 6- to 8-foot tall shrub is nothing short of spectacular with showy white panicle flowers from mid- to late August.

### ***Rosa*, shrub rose**

New easy-care roses grow 2 to 4 feet in height and flower beautifully throughout August. They also fit well into the perennial border and are outstanding when combined with ornamental grasses. Especially good choices to enhance the August garden include Home Run™ (bright red), Knockout™ (red-pink), Blushing Knockout™ (palest pink), Pink Knockout™ (soft pink), and Yellow Submarine™ (bright yellow).

### ***Teucrium chamaedrrys*, germander**

A diminutive 15 inches tall, this germander bears lavender flowers in mid-August. The shiny leaves make a good full-sun substitute for boxwood and can be sheared.

### ***Vitex agnus-castus*, chastetree**

While not stem-hardy in zones 4 and 5, chastetree will put forth new growth from the crown, reaching a height of 5 to 7 feet in one growing season. Lavender flowers, similar to butterfly bush, are produced on new growth throughout August. Anyone who has planted butterfly bush only to have it die over winter will appreciate this alternative. Removing the dead stems in spring is essential to maintain an attractive appearance.

## **For More Information**

For more information on plant selection, cultural practices, and environmental quality, contact your local Iowa State University Extension office or visit these Web sites:

### **ISU Extension Distribution Center**

[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)

### **ISU Horticulture**

[www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu](http://www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu)

### **Reiman Gardens**

[www.reimangardens.iastate.edu](http://www.reimangardens.iastate.edu)

Special thanks to the University of Nebraska Extension Master Gardeners of Douglas/Sarpy County.

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