

## Garden Column

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A week devoted to wildflowers is just about as good as a holiday devoted to trees. While Arbor Day is a well-known holiday celebrated across the state, Nebraska Wildflower Week should be celebrated just as much.

Nebraska Wildflower Weeks' focus is on embracing wildflowers and native plants. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum (NSA) coordinates Wildflower Week activities in which they bring together organizations that know the true value of wildflowers. Visit NSA's website at <http://arboretum.unl.edu> to find out about Wildflower Week events across the state June 2-10. "Where wildflowers are thriving, it is a sign that the environment is healthy," said Bob Henrickson, whose nursery production work with the Arboretum concentrates on native and regionally-appropriate plants.

Wildflowers and native plants can be unique and interesting additions to the landscape. What is the difference between native plants and wildflowers? The terms "native" and "wildflower" are often used interchangeably, but there is a difference. Native plants in the Great Plains are generally described as those found growing in a defined area prior to European settlers. Wildflowers are described as flowering plants that grow with little or no human help. They can either be native or introduced, or brought in from other areas. Both wildflowers and native plants work well in low maintenance areas and in sites that need hardy, drought tolerant plants.

## Top 5 wildflower picks of 2012:

Coneflower, *Echinacea purpurea*- the purplish pink blooms with the stiff looking cone in the center can add multiple seasons of interest in the landscape with bloom color in June and July followed by dark brown to black cone which will stand throughout the fall and winter.

Blanket flower, *Gaillardia* species- low growing plants work great near the edge of a bed or used to help to soften the end of a sidewalk. Bright yellow to orangish red flowers show up June through August and are followed by a puffball of a seed head.

Pitcher Sage, *Salvia azurea*- a member of the mint family reaches 3-6 feet tall with striking blue-violet flowers in August through September. Allow it to act as a backdrop for other plants. It likes to flop over so support may be necessary.

Small Soapweed, *Yucca glauca*- depending on where you are from, *Yucca*, can be seen as a landscape plant or a weed. The edible, greenish-white blooms appear on a spike and are followed by large green seedpods. The evergreen foliage also provides winter interest in the landscape.

Yarrow, *Achillea* species- the fine greenish gray leaves of the yarrow are a good indication how hardy this plant is. The flowers come in a wide range of colors from white, to yellow, to even pinkish red.

This is just a sample of a few wildflowers; there are many more interesting wildflowers to learn about. More information about wildflowers can be found in a UNL Extension NebGuide, a University publication, 'Wildflowers for the Home Landscape'. Go to <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu> and search for the keyword 'wildflowers'.

Upcoming Programs:

Rain Garden Workshop: Have you ever wondered how to use rainwater runoff from the roof, sidewalk, or driveway in the home, business, or public landscape? Here is your chance to learn how! The workshop will be held **Wednesday, June 20, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at the UNL Extension in Hall County Meeting rooms** located in College Park. Free to the public. Please contact the Hall County Extension Office, 308-385-5088 or [hall-county@unl.edu](mailto:hall-county@unl.edu), prior to June 18 to reserve your spot. More information can be found at <http://hall.unl.edu>

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