



Master Gardener News

Travel and Explore!

World Rose Festival June 19-21, 2009
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
www.worldrosefestival.com.

Master Gardener State Conference

Mark your calendar for the Master Gardener State Conference which is scheduled for **August 7-8, 2009** on the St. Paul University of Minnesota campus.

Website: Wild About Gardening

For the gardening novice or the seasoned pro, our *Get Gardening* section offers an abundance of advice, tools, and resources.

Go Organic - To be a fully "green" gardener, you must carefully consider the effect your gardening choices have on the environment around you.

Gardening for Wildlife - for expert guidance on attracting the kinds of wildlife you enjoy most, use this search feature to uncover the rich abundance of material we offer on gardening for wildlife.

Extra! Extra! Get the latest in gardening news and updates in this section of *Gardening Gab*.

Advanced Gardening -You know the basics. Soil, organics, and providing food, water, and shelter for wildlife are all second nature. But now you'd like to take on some specific projects. Think about creating edge habitat or introducing some native ornamental grasses to your design scheme. Check out our host of *garden projects* that will introduce you to some of the finer points of gardening with wildlife in mind.

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Dakota Gardener
- Viability of Seeds
- Start those Seeds - When?
- Dill
- Make Your Own Pots



"Gardening Is Divine in 2009"

East Grand Forks Senior High School
East Grand Forks, MN
April 18, 2009 8:00 am - 4:30 pm

This annual event brings gardeners from all over North Dakota, Minnesota and Manitoba for a day of learning and fun.

Guest Speaker will be Melinda Myers, writer, columnist and contributing editor, television and radio host. For more information go to:

http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/county/grandforks/programs/horticulture/gardsat_files/GS%202009.htm where you can see the brochure or register for the event.

Showy Shrubs For The North

Northern Gold Forsythia (*Forsythia "Northern Gold"*)

Zone 3(2)

Forsythia is typically the first shrub to bloom with vivacious color in early spring, and is very common in warmer climates. Because its golden-yellow bell-shaped flowers are so very showy, most people associate this with the true advent of the spring gardening season. If you've ever seen one in full bloom (and you can literally see these from a mile away), you will no doubt agree.

One problem common to all Forsythias is that once they have finished with their gaudy performance in early spring, for the remaining 50 weeks of the year, they are actually quite mangy and ragged looking. The best way to manage Forsythias the rest of the year is to plant them in groupings of 3 or more, using them in landscape applications where groupings are most valuable; as screens, to cover large areas of ground, etc. When used in mass, their scrubby habits tend to be overlooked.

Double Flowering Plum (*Prunus triloba "Multiplex"*)

Zone 2

This large shrub or small tree is surprisingly uncommon in northern gardens, without a good explanation. It is best described as a small plum tree which features double white flowers in early spring before the leaves. In a way, it's flowering characteristics resemble those of a white flowering crab apple, but is smaller enough in all respects to work better in most home landscape settings. In fact, it is a good size to use as a tall accent or anchor in a garden setting, mixed with other shrubs and perennials. As added benefits, it also features steely-black bark with prominent horizontal markings and decent fall color in most years.

This is one very hardy plant. A selected variety of the Canada Plum, it inherits the tenacious hardiness of the species, but with better ornamental characteristics. I strongly recommend it for use zones 2 and higher, particularly for smaller yards where the larger flowering crabs are simply too big and unwieldy. This can be in a garden setting, but the key is, it needs all the room it can get. This plant requires a great deal of spring sunlight to flower well, and will not tolerate even a couple of hours of shade. It also grows quite large (up to 8' tall and wide), and makes its biggest impact when mature, so allow it plenty of room.

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Dakota Gardener Newsletter

The March 2009 issue of the Dakota Gardener is now available. It can be downloaded at <http://www.dakotagardener.com/newsletter.html>

Seasonal garden tips plus feature stories on landscaping with ornamental grasses, growing blueberries in the backyard, evaluating new vegetable and flower varieties, avoiding gardening hoaxes, planting trees with kids, and -- in honor of St. Patrick's Day -- a special story on Irish gardening.



Seed Testers Wanted

Seed catalogs are full of new varieties every spring. Besides the ordinary beans, tomatoes, and marigolds this year, you can find purple carrots, Christmas melons, and zucchini that look like flying saucers! There is an explosion of new sunflower varieties, with blooms coming in shades of red, yellow, and orange!

Are these varieties any good? We honestly don't know. North Dakota State University is developing a team of 200 gardeners to test 88 varieties of vegetables and flowers. Gardening is for everyone, and everyone is welcome to participate!

The University is not looking for complicated data. We simply wish to know which of the two varieties in each trial was most healthy, produced the most vegetables (or flowers) and had the highest quality vegetables (or flowers). It's a great educational project for kids.

At the end of the year, participating gardeners will receive a final report from results across the state as well as a certificate that recognizes their participation.

Gardeners can choose to test up to 7 trials (each trial compares two varieties). Marking stakes and instructions will be provided. There is a small fee of \$1 per trial.

Download our seed catalog and on-line ordering is available. If you don't have access to a computer, please contact NDSU Horticulturist Dr. Tom Kalb at (701) 221-6865 for a registration form. We are accepting orders for seeds now.

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To learn more about this fun project, go to

www.dakotagardener.com/trials

tom.kalb@ndsu.edu for questions

(editor's note: I emailed Tom telling him I lived close to Bemidji and asked if it would be ok to join the testing. He replied that the weather conditions were so similar to North Dakota's that it would be wonderful if I joined.)

Gardening With Kids: Potato Towers

There's something timeless about digging for buried treasure that every kid enjoys, regardless of age. And potato harvesting is a treasure hunt! You know there are spuds hidden in the soil, but it's always a surprise to unearth their varied shapes, sizes, and colors, and see the amount of your harvest.

If you don't have garden space for potatoes, don't worry — you can grow them in towers! Potato towers are a productive and space-saving way to harvest some fresh spuds. Plus, this technique is easier on your back and more fun for your kids. Here's how to build a potato tower.

1. Using chicken wire, heavy-gauge wire, or wooden fencing, make a cylinder that's 2 or 3 feet in diameter and 3 or 4 feet tall. Secure the cylinder with wire fasteners.
2. Ideally, place the cylinder on cultivated ground in a location that gets at least 6 hours of sun a day, and that's close to the house and a water spigot.
3. If your cylinder is made from wire, line the inside of the cage with hay, straw, cardboard, or newspaper to prevent the soil from falling through the gaps. All of these materials will decompose during the growing season, adding to the fertility of your tower.
4. Put a 4-inch-thick layer of compost in the bottom of the cylinder.
5. You'll need 4 or 5 seed potatoes (or pieces), each containing at least 3 "eyes." Place the potatoes on top of the compost, 6 inches apart. Don't use grocery store potatoes because these varieties may be susceptible to disease and have usually been treated with sprout inhibitors. Consider growing different-colored potato varieties to give your kids a real thrill. Select varieties such as 'All Blue', 'All Red', and 'Yukon Gold.'
6. Cover the potatoes with a 3- to 4-inch-thick layer of soil. Water well.

[\(continued on page 7\)](#)

Viability Of Vegetable Seeds By Sherry Rindels, Dept of Hort. Iowa State

Seed Type	Years
Asparagus	3
Beans	3
Beets	4
Broccoli	5
Cabbage	5
Carrot	3
Cauliflower	5
Corn	2
Cucumbers	5
Kohlrabi	4
Lettuce	5
Muskmelons	5
Onions	1
Peas	3
Peppers	2
Pumpkins	4
Radishes	5
Spinach	5
Squash	4
Tomatoes	4
Watermelons	4

Flowers

(University Of Wisconsin -
Madison)

Delphinium	1
Aster	2
Phlox	2
Sweet Pea	2
African Daisy	3
Cosmos	3
Dusty Miller	3
Marigold	3
Pansy	3
Petunia	3
Scabiosa	3
Shasta Daisy	3
Snap Dragon	3
Verbena	3
Sweet Alyssum	4
Calendula	5
Carnation	5
Chrysanthemum	5
Hollyhock	5
Nasturtium	5
Stock	5
Zinnia	5



High Tunnel

Extending the Season with High Tunnels

Terrance T. Nennich, Extension Professor, U of M Extension Service

The gardening season in Northern Minnesota is brutal and harsh to say the least. Lack of heat units, freezing temperatures in early June and late August, very cool nights and high winds are very challenging to even the most experienced and patient gardeners. The long period of times that plants are wet from dew or prolonged rain can make disease control nearly impossible some years. Gardeners in Northern Minnesota are usually very optimistic people, continually telling themselves that next year things will be much better and the weather will be much more cooperative to help produce that lush bountiful harvest that we all hope for. Then about every five years, somewhat ideal conditions come together and that super abundant crop is produced. And so the cycle goes.

High tunnels can help gardeners produce that great crop every year with little risk. High tunnels can increase the growing season as much as 5-6 weeks earlier in the spring and also in the fall. What are high tunnels?

While high tunnels resemble greenhouses in appearance, this is the only similarity. High tunnels do not use electricity, do not use artificial heat (except in emergency situations), use only a single layer of plastic, and achieve ventilation from natural airflow by rolling up the sides instead of using electric fans. Drip irrigation is used to water the crops.

Crops in high tunnels are typically grown in the ground, as is the case for typical garden crops; however container gardening in high tunnels is very possible.

Compared to typical garden grown crops the yield and quality of produce and flowers are usually far superior in high tunnels. Additionally, Minnesota research has indicated that high tunnels have greatly aided in the control of diseases and in reducing common vegetable and flower pest problems. High tunnels provide an excellent tool for organic production in Minnesota since diseases and other pests can be controlled without chemical intervention.

High tunnels can either be permanent or on heavy skids and movable. Some gardens use high tunnels to start early flower beds and pull the high tunnel away in early summer, allowing flowers to bloom several weeks earlier. Most vegetable gardeners prefer permanent structures as they are more weather resistant, especially in high winds.

While high tunnels can be constructed in many shapes and sizes, they must be of a minimum size to be efficient and utilize solar radiation efficiently. While the jury is still out on an exact minimum size, I recommend at least 10-12 foot wide, 6-8 ft high at the peak and about 20 ft long.

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When to Start Seeds

If you want to figure out your own planting schedule from scratch, here's how to do it."

Start by separating all your packets of seed into two piles: those that will be "direct - sown" (planted right in the garden) and those that will be started indoors. The outdoors pile will include most vegetables, such as peas, beans, corn, radishes, carrots, beets, lettuce, spinach, melons, cucumbers, and squash.

Most annual flowers will also go into the direct-sow pile: zinnias, asters, lavatera, nasturtiums, sunflowers, bachelor's buttons, and calendula. If your growing season is very short or your garden conditions are especially difficult, you may decide to put some of these annual flowers into you "sow indoors" pile. Most perennial flowers will need to be started indoors.

Start reading the back of the "sow indoors" seed packets. You should find something like "for earliest bloom or production, start 6-8 weeks before last frost date"

If there's no information on the seed packet, you can pretty safely just start all your seeds about 6 weeks before you'll plant them outdoors. Make note of which plants are too big or too small at planting time, and then you can make adjustments next year based on your notes. For detailed instructions on starting 500 varieties of annual and perennial flowers, I highly recommend Eileen Powell's book, *From Seed to Bloom* (Storey 1995). For more information go to:

<http://www.gardeners.com/How-to-Start-Seeds/5062,default.pq.html>

Dill

The seed, flower and leaf are all extensively used in cooking, the seed and flowering top used in pickles and the leaf or "weed", chopped, used in potato salads, cream cheese, soups, grilled meats and salmon. Dill weed is also a great complement to fish and egg dishes. It is also used in dips combined with other herbs and sour cream. The seed is also commonly added to baked goods including bread. The seed flavor dominates and the weed and seed are excellent with vegetables and fish.

Dill has a long history that dates back to Egyptian times. Well known for its ability to settle the stomach and relieve gas after eating, dill seeds were often placed on the table after big meals and banquets, so that dining guests could help themselves as need be. Puritans and Quakers would give their children dill seeds to chew on during long church meetings, due to its mild hunger-suppressing qualities. Dill is a very good source of calcium and is rich in manganese, iron, and magnesium.

"Fernleaf" dill is a 1992 All-America Selection winner. This unique dwarf dill reaches only 18 inches tall, so it needs no staking. It is an excellent plant for container growing and looks great in flower arrangements. "Dukat" is grown for its abundant foliage, which is perfect for salads. Sow seed in clumps. This variety is considered a tender annual, so start seeds indoors 4 to 6 weeks before the last spring frost. "Bouquet" is an early bloomer that sports large seed heads and dark blue-green foliage and is ideal for pickling.

"Long Island" or "Mammoth" dill is so reliable that it is commonly grown by commercial growers. (Sources: [Help With Cooking](#), http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dill#cite_note-5, [Using Dill in Cooking](#)), and [Richter's](#)



Extending the Season With High Tunnels (cont.)

Before constructing a high tunnel, gardeners should raise the soil level at least 4-6 inches so the floor of the high tunnel is above the surrounding ground level. This will allow excess water from heavy rains to flow away from the tunnel.

While it is recommended to use a plastic that is six mil UV treated greenhouse clear, that will last four to six years, it is possible to start out with an inexpensive four mil that will usually last only one year. However to get that very early spring start it is recommended to leave the plastic on the entire year.

While high tunnels have many great advantages, gardeners must be aware that there is a learning curve to using high tunnels. Management concerns include, letting the tunnels get too hot, not supplying enough soil fertility, not supplying timely irrigation through the drip tape and letting the weeds get out of control.

High tunnel web sites that I recommend include hightunnels.org. This is a national site and has some simple designs using PVC and other materials. hightunnels.cfans.umn.edu is the University of Minnesota High Tunnel Web Site and contains the online version of the Minnesota High Tunnel Manual, along with several recent PowerPoint presentations and a list serve. Gardeners interested in purchasing a hard copy of the Minnesota High Tunnel Production Manual may do so by calling 763 434 0400. The cost is 25.00 plus shipping.

Winter Sowing

Winter Sowing is done outdoors during Winter using mini-greenhouses made from recyclables; there are no heating devices, no energy wasting light set-ups or expensive seed starting devices. After sowing, the mini-greenhouse is placed outside to wait for the end of Winter. The seeds will begin to germinate at their own right time when weather warms.

Seed Selection

Look at a seed catalogue, most will have some sort of notation about a seed's germination requirements, or you'll pick up a few clue-in phrases.

Look for These Terms

Needs Pre-chilling (freeze seeds, refrigerate seeds, stratify for x amount of days or weeks), Needs Stratification, Will Colonize, Self Sows, Sow outdoors in early Autumn, Sow outdoors in early Spring while nights are still cool, Sow outdoors in early Spring while frosts may still occur, Hardy Seeds, Seedlings can withstand frost, Can be direct sown early, Wildflower, Weed (such as butterfly weed, joe pye weed, jewel weed.)

Look for Common Names Indicating a natural environment.

Plains, Prairie, Desert, Mountain, Swamp, Field, River, etc

Look for Names that might indicate a temperate climate.

Siberian, Chinensis, Polar, Alpine, Orientale, Canadensis, Caucasian, Russian (indicating Soviet origin).

For information on types of containers to use, seeds you can winter sow and the steps to winter sow in your containers go to: <http://wintersown.org/>.

(Information gathered from Wintersown.org website)

Make Your Own Pots

Want to start some seedlings but you don't have any pots? Here's an easy way to make your own pots without any fancy equipment. Things you'll need are:

- Black & white newsprint
 - Tall glass or jar
 - Potting Soil
 - Plastic Tray
 - Seeds
1. Lay a full sheet of black and white newspaper flat.
 2. Fold the paper in half lengthwise twice to form a long, narrow strip of folded newspaper.
 3. Lay the glass on its side and place it on one end of the strip of paper. Roll the newspaper around the glass. The glass is used only as a form to roll the paper. About 1/2 of the strip of paper should overlap the open end of the glass.
 4. Push the ends of the paper into the open end of the glass. This step doesn't have to be neat and tidy; just stuff the overlapping newspaper into the glass.
 5. Pull the jar out of the newspaper pocket so you have the newspaper pot in your hand.
 6. Push the bottom of the jar into the newspaper cup, squashing the folded bottom to flatten. This step will seal the bottom of your pot. Once the pot has been filled with soil, the bottom will be secure.
 7. Pull the jar out and you have a finished paper pot.

To see a video showing how to make the pots go to:
http://www.ehow.com/video_1745_create-seed-starting.html

Coleus Finder

Introduction

Coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*) plants offer incredibly colorful foliage in a variety of attractive shapes and sizes. There are a large number of cultivars and these have an interesting history. Almost all gardeners in the world know the seed-propagated varieties of this plant and most garden books mention it shortly, but only a few gardeners are aware of the superb cutting varieties that exist and only one book dedicated to Coleus is ever published.

Some Garden trials in the US in the last decade revealed sun-tolerant cultivars also known as Sun-coleus. This helped Coleus to become a popular garden plant in the US in recent years. Also in Japan the plant is grown more often. Latest developments are the (re-introduction of large leaved seed coleus: the Kong series.

Hopefully this web portal will be of help to spread the renewed popularity of Coleus in the US and Japan to other parts of the world.

Mission

Very little information about Coleus cultivars is published in books and articles, but a lot of information can be found on the internet. This information is very scattered and sometimes difficult to find though.



Coleus - Blumei

This portal has the goal to aggregate this scattered information together, to get a clear overview of the existing cultivars and their availability and also to get some clues about the correct naming of the cultivars.

On top of the aggregated information also some extra information is added, like experiences from gardeners.

<http://coleusfinder.org/index.php>

Showy Shrubs For The North (continued from Page 2)

Princess Kay Plum (Prunus nigra "Princess Kay")

Zone 2

This large shrub or small tree is surprisingly uncommon in northern gardens, without a good explanation. It is best described as a small plum tree which features double white flowers in early spring before the leaves. In a way, it's flowering characteristics resemble those of a white flowering crab apple, but is smaller enough in all respects to work better in most home landscape settings. In fact, it is a good size to use as a tall accent or anchor in a garden setting, mixed with other shrubs and perennials. As added benefits, it also features steely-black bark with prominent horizontal markings and decent fall color in most years.

This is one very hardy plant. A selected variety of the Canada Plum, it inherits the tenacious hardiness of the species, but with better ornamental characteristics. I strongly recommend it for use zones 2 and higher, particularly for smaller yards where the larger flowering crabs are simply too big and unwieldy.

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Showy Shrubs For The North [\(continued from Page 6\)](#)

French Pussy Willow (*Salix caprea*)

Zone 4(3)

Yes, pussy willows are actually the flowers of the female willows. You might not associate willows with showy flowering shrubs, but let me assure you, when they are mature, they can put on quite a performance with their branches shrouded in a soft, fuzzy white. Best of all, they are one of the very first plants to bloom in the North, typically starting their flowering in March with the first hints of spring warmth, long before the cold air has left us. This shrub works well in the garden or as a large foundation anchor, growing 10 to 15 feet tall, often quite bushy. The best performance I ever saw from a French Pussy Willow was a plant used as a solitary accent in a front yard, contrary to what many people advise; it put on an amazing display of flowers in very early spring and literally stole the show.

French Pussy Willow is reliably hardy to zone 4, but can often be grown in zone 3 with some shelter. There is an interesting cultivar, "Pendula", which is strongly weeping and makes a stunning garden feature plant.

(source: <http://www.northscaping.com/default.asp>)



French Pussy Willow

"it put on an amazing display of flowers in very early spring and literally stole the show"

[\(continued from page 3\)](#)

Potato Towers

7. Cover the potatoes with a 3- to 4-inch-thick layer of soil. Water well.
8. As the potato plants grow, cover them with more compost. To save money, you can also use a mix of compost and topsoil or potting soil.
9. When the soil line is 6 inches below the top of the cylinder, stop adding soil and let the potato plants continue to grow. Keep well watered.
10. By later summer the plants should begin to yellow — your signal that it's time to harvest
11. Have your kids remove the wire fasteners holding the potato tower together and watch as the soil and spuds come

tumbling out.

12. After removing the spuds, save the soil for use in another container or spread it in your garden.

Your kids will be impressed with your harvest — you should find 10 to 20 new potatoes per plant! Cure the tubers in a 50° to 60°F room out of direct sun for two weeks. Then store them in a cool (40°F) basement or garage for up to 6 months, depending on the variety. To buy a pre-made tower, check out these [potato planters](#).

(source: <http://www.kidsgardening.com/>)



Minnesota Master
Gardeners

Master Gardeners are University of Minnesota-trained volunteers whose job is to educate the public about a variety of horticulture subjects using readily-available, up-to-date research-based information. This educational effort is designed to enhance the public's quality of life and to promote good stewardship of the environment.

The University of Minnesota is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

Editor

Verna Jackson

Beltrami County Master Gardener

218.224.3643

verna@paulbunyan.net

KUDOS
To
Terri and Michael Mann
Thanks for all the great material you have sent me. I appreciate it so much.
Thank You
To
Terry Nennich and Becky Livermore for their contribution to this newsletter.



TALL Annual Flowers Add Grace And Height To Our Gardens

By Becky Livermore, Beltrami County Master Gardener

TALL is a word seldom used around our household. It's just not in our genes. Except for our big Airedale, Fletcher, TALL just doesn't apply. But as I think of some of my favorites of the flower world, I realize that TALL does indeed hold a special place in my heart – as well as in the background of a corner flower bed.

My list begins with tall annual flowers that are easy to grow, and will quickly fill in a new perennial garden while we wait for the long-term residents to grow and prosper. Most also make great cut flowers for bouquets.

First on my list is cosmos. Big and tall, yet graceful and airy at the same time, **Cosmos**, this 3-4 foot plant carries long stemmed daisy-shaped blossoms. The fine, feathery, light green leaves give this flower a delicate look although it stands up well to wind and rain without staking. It's a no-fuss plant, requiring full sun and average soil. Flowers of the old variety, Sensation, range in colors of rose, pink and white; Diablo boasts a bright orange. A terrific flower for hot summers, cosmos blooms non-stop all season long. The Seashells hybrid is unique with fluted tubular petals giving it a three dimensional effect. Cosmos seems to last almost forever in bouquets. The more we cut, the more they bloom! Best of all, they can be direct-seeded. There's no need to start them earlier indoors.

Nicotiana, or flowering tobacco, is a fabulous annual when planted either en masse or as a specimen. Each plant forms a plump mound of large, oval leaves and sends up several stems topped with clusters of tubular flowers in white, pink, red, yellow or green. They bloom the best in full sun (with plenty of moisture) but also thrive in partial shade. With regular watering and fertilizing, they'll put on a spectacular show. Shorter hybrids, usually unscented, are available so be sure to check which you're buying. Only the Lonely (*N.sylvestris*) reaches five feet with side stems of candlebra-like clusters that open as many as 20 to 30 long tubular blossoms. This white, fragrant nicotiana resembles the older varieties that close during the heat of the day and open in the evenings to release their jasmine-like perfume. Bergeson's Nursery usually has a spectacular display of this variety.

Cleome, commonly called spider flower, thrives on little care. Like cosmos, cleome combines size and delicacy, and blooms in a white-pink-purple color range. Their dramatic ball-shaped flower heads and dark green, deeply indented leaves suit them to contemporary settings as well as old-fashioned cottage gardens. Cleome blooms as it grows (4 to 5 feet tall) all summer long. The long, narrow seedpods jut out beneath the blooms and along the stems, giving them the "spidery" appearance. Full sun in a well-drained soil is their preference but they'll tolerate partial sun. Cleome reseeds itself easily. One season of plantings usually means several years of surprise pop-ups. One cleome sprinkled here and there isn't as spectacular as an entire backdrop of them. The newer variety, Sparkler, is shorter and bushier than the older varieties.

Technically speaking, **hollyhocks** belong in the biennial group, blooming July to September in the second year from seed. However, if kept happy, they habitually self-sow which confuses us into thinking of them as perennials. In reality, each plant blooms only once and then dies, so I'll include them with my favorite annuals. I love the old-fashioned ones that grow 5 to 7 feet tall with 3-5 inch cup shaped flowers along the top half of the stem. No cottage garden would be complete without a nostalgic backdrop of tall hollyhocks. They were always blooming along the west wall of the summer kitchen on the farm where I grew up, a teeny shed that was later transformed into a playhouse for my sis and me. The deep reds and bright pinks were my favorites but I remember making hollyhock dolls from the fresh white and silky yellows, too. This spring I started some indoors from seed and will set them out in a corner by a split rail fence. In another year, their blooms will give a welcoming, friendly air to our front yard. They need full sun, good air circulation (to cut down on mildew diseases which can be a problem), well-drained soil and regular watering. Once settled in, they'll give us years of pleasure. Containerized plants from nurseries will usually flower the first year for us.

For a rugged, informal look, nothing beats **Tithonia**, commonly called Mexican sunflower. The variety "Fiesta del Sol" meaning sun party, is listed in my latest Jung catalog. It bears bright orange flowers and thrives in hot, dry summers. I can't forget to mention **sunflowers** that are available in every height imaginable. This flower is perfect for a child's garden as the huge seeds are easy to handle and the plant grows quickly. The names given to some newer varieties – Ring of Fire, Moulin Rouge, Peach Passion and Soraya – kindle the imagination. Many of the **Amaranthus** varieties are tall growers and reseed easily. For spectacular floral arrangements, a grouping of Bells of Ireland (*molucella laevis*) that reaches almost 3 feet adds garden interest. The long stems are lined with whorls of apple-green bell shaped flowers. The stems also have thorns that can prick an innocent gardener's finger!