

## Summer-blooming plants

We tend to shop for landscape plants in the spring and then, with hotter weather, stay away for the rest of the year. We often have a glorious flower show from perennials and shrubs in our yards through early June, and then a few plants bloom the rest of the year. This can make our landscapes boring, but many plants bloom in hot weather. To find them involves going to local garden centers at least monthly to see what is available. Here are a few that do well in Utah.

**Blanket Flower:** Also known as Gaillardia, these flowers are a delight to behold, blooming almost all summer in shades of red, orange, and yellow. They are perennials and grow 12 – 18 inches tall and wide. They must be grown in drier areas, but with a little care, they can thrive. If the soil is consistently too wet, they will struggle, but with regular deadheading, a simple task that can be done a few times a week, they will reward you with their profuse flower production.

**Hydrangea:** While the big-leaf hydrangeas with blue flowers may not fare well in Utah's hot weather, other species are a perfect fit, showcasing their resilience. The smooth hydrangea is the most common, but panicle and oakleaf hydrangeas are also well-suited and reasonably available. These adaptable species offer a range of sizes, from a few feet tall to over 6 feet, and flower colors span from white to various shades of pink. They bloom in July and continue adding color to your landscape throughout the season, proving their resilience and that beauty can thrive even in the hottest conditions.

**Rose of Sharon:** This shrub species has been grown in Utah for a long time. It is a member of the Hibiscus family, and old-fashioned types usually have white flowers with a wine-purple middle. They also grow huge, reaching over 10 feet high and wide. Newer cultivars may still grow that big but have more profuse blooms in various flower colors. There are newer dwarf cultivars that only grow half that size and even some that are columnar that only grow 3 – 4 feet wide. Rose of Sharon generally blooms from July until frost.

**Black-Eyed Susan:** These perennial favorites, also known by the Latin name Rudbeckia, have been popular for many years. There are two common species. Rudbeckia hirta, which blooms profusely, is available in yellow, orange, and red flower colors and is a short-lived perennial. Rudbeckia fulgida is longer lived, often blooming from July – October, and usually has yellow flowers. Two popular cultivars include Goldsturm (Gold Storm) and American Goldrush. The variety of colors and blooming periods, from mid-summer to early fall, make them a fascinating addition to any garden, ensuring a burst of color throughout the season.

**Perennial Hibiscus:** Cousins to Rose of Sharon, these die to the ground in the fall and re-sprout in late spring. Old-fashioned types usually had white flowers, often grew to over 6 feet tall, and needed staking, or they would fall over. There are dozens of more recent introductions that are self-supporting, max out at 3 feet high and wide, and are available in many flower colors, including white, pink, and red. Many cultivars also have burgundy-red leaves. Perennial hibiscus are long-lived and require full sun to thrive.

Many other summer-blooming plants are available, including monarda, catmint, salvias, dwarf Russian sage, lavender, blue mist (bluebeard), dwarf butterfly bush, tickseed, and Stella de Oro

daylily. Even though it is hot, consider visiting local garden centers to give your yard that needed summer interest.