

Featured Perennial

Rudbeckia fulgida (perennial types), *Rudbeckia hirta* (short lived perennial types) Black-Eyed Susan, Coneflower, Gloriosa Daisy

Submitted by: Debi Borden-Miller
Hardy Boy Plants



Photo Credit: Debi Borden-Miller

Botanic name:	<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i> (perennial types), <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i> (short lived perennial types)
Common name:	Black-Eyed Susan, Coneflower, Gloriosa Daisy
Height:	12 – 40 inches, vary by variety
Width:	11 – 30 inches
Light:	Full sun
Water:	Average, once established fairly drought tolerant, XX-rated
Soil:	Tolerates most soil types, does best in well drained area
Growth Habit:	Upright, bushy plant
How to use:	Plant in borders, spotted in beds or in containers

Since *Rudbeckia* come in a wide range of sizes, colors, and shapes they appeal to a wide range of gardeners. These late summer workhorses in the garden are wonderful massed in borders, staged in small groups throughout the bed or in containers. *Rudbeckia hirta* are the “short-lived perennials or annual” types. These types may come back the following year, but not reliably, some will re-seed. The *Rudbeckia fulgida* varieties such as ‘Goldsturm’, are the hardier, perennial types.



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There are 25 species of Rudbeckia, all of which are native to North American meadows and prairies. They can be found growing wild on roadsides and in undisturbed meadows. When categorizing plants, Linnaeus honored his friend Olof Rudbeck by naming this plant after him. Native Americans used the roots for medicinal purposes to treat people and horses. The roots and flowers were made into teas and compresses to treat snakebites, worms, earaches, indigestion, burns and sores. They used Rudbeckia in place of Echinacea when it was not available. Rudbeckias were one of the first of the wild coneflowers to be domesticated into gardens. In 1918 Rudbeckia was named the state flower of Maryland.

Rudbeckia starts blooming in mid-summer and continues to fall. The classic Black-eyed Susan has a flower that is daisy-like, with predominately yellow to gold petals surrounding a dark “cone” center. ‘Prairie Sun’ and ‘Irish Eyes’ are varieties that have a green cone center. Rudbeckia flowers can be single, semi-double, or fully double. The “short-lived perennials or annual” types, commonly called Gloriosa daisies may show rusty, bronze, maroon or mahogany coloration in the petals, like ‘Denver Daisy’. The leaves of all varieties are elongated oval, coarse and hairy. Rudbeckia attract bees, butterflies and birds and are deer resistant. Leaving the last flowers standing at the end of the season provides seeds for the birds and textural interest through the winter. All varieties make great cut flowers, lasting a long time in vases.

Rudbeckia are easy to grow, adapting to a variety of growing conditions with minimal care. Although they are adaptable to most garden soils they prefer well drained soils with average moisture. Once they are established they are somewhat drought tolerant. They are rated XX by the Garden Centers of Colorado system. That means they do well with 1/2” of water a week. Do not over fertilize because excess fertilizer can cause leggy, weak stems and floppy flowers. Rudbeckia do not have many insect or disease problems but may get powdery mildew or leaf spot. They do benefit from some deadheading. If they become overcrowded, it is best to divide them in the early spring, just as the new growth is emerging.

The beautiful golden flowers are great companions with other late summer bloomers like Russian Sage, Sedum ‘Autumn Joy’, Asters or Chrysanthemums. They also fit well into meadow or prairie gardens with grasses like Switchgrass or Little Bluestem. Short varieties like ‘Toto’ (grows 12-15” tall) are great in container gardens with cool season plants like flowering cabbage or kale, pansies, coral bells, ivy, sedums, etc.

The Rudbeckias are an award winning genus. There are many varieties that have won awards over the years.

1995 ‘Indian Summer’ - All America Selections winner – Huge 5-9’ flowers on 36” plants.

1999 ‘Goldsturm’ – Perennial Plant of the Year – Truly perennial type naturalizes very well.

2002 ‘Cherokee Sunset’ – All America Selections winner - Semi double to fully double, 2-4” flowers are yellow, orange, bronze and mahogany.

2003 ‘Prairie Sun’ – All America Selections winner – 5” flowers are golden yellow tipped with lighter primrose yellow surrounding a green cone. Grow to 3 feet tall.

2008 Year of Rudbeckia – National Garden Bureau

2009 ‘Tiger Eye Gold’ – American Garden Award- Very uniform habit, 16-24” tall x 16-24” wide

2009 ‘Denver Daisy’ – Plant Select Winner- Striking flowers have gold petals with a dark cone and dark “ring” around the cone. 18-28” tall, 10-25” wide

2010 ‘Denver Daisy’- American Garden Award winner

Because there are annual and perennial types, shorter and taller varieties it is best to talk to a professional at a garden center to get the right plant for the right situation in your yard.



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