

YEAR OF THE RUDBECKIA 2020

Enrich your garden borders, pots and planters with some bright and beautiful summer blooms. Plant some rudbeckias for weeks of colour and interest



Imagine a plant that costs less than a bottle of wine that will flower its socks off for weeks in your garden from mid summer right into the autumn. Meet the rudbeckia. Sometimes called a coneflower, due to its rich, brown velvety centre, this magnificent plant is a real garden stalwart and a stunner. Rudbeckias are low maintenance plants with masses of vibrant blooms that add drama to the garden, can be picked as cut flowers and attract a wide variety of garden pollinators too. There are lots of different types of these wonderful plants. You can grow many of them from seed and fill your flowerbeds with a handful of seed packets, or invest in a tray of bedding rudbeckias or some pots of perennials.

NOT JUST YELLOW

There's a glorious choice of fiery flower colours within the rudbeckias. Golden yellow flowers with rich brown centres, while dramatic and stunning, are not the only option. You can grow lovely varieties with tall yellow flowers and unusual green centres, or rich red flowers that are almost black when they open and then fade to a chocolaty rusty red and there are even a few that sport bicolor petals with a mahogany flush at the centre of the flowers and

electric yellow ends. There are annuals that grow, flower and die in one year, biennials that flower in their second year and incredibly versatile perennials that once established will flower year after year. Look out for giant perennial types such as Rudbeckia laciniata 'Herbstsonne' and choose compact varieties and annual and biennial strains that are better suited to pots and containers.

Tip – Buy large established perennial plants at the garden centre or

nursery for instant impact and longevity. Plant in groups of three or five for the best results.

BUTTERFLIES AND BEES

Rudbeckias are important plants for pollinators like bees, butterflies and hoverflies. Not only are the open flowers rich in pollen and nectar, but their daisy shape makes them excellent landing pads for pollinators, supporting the weight of bulky bumblebees as well as delicate butterflies.

EASY FROM SEED

For the very best value for money grow rudbeckias from seed, especially if you want lots of plants. Sow them into modules or small pots filled with a quality seed compost about 4 weeks before the last frost in spring. Sow them very thinly onto the surface of the compost and place in a light, frost-free place to germinate. When the seedlings are large enough to handle, gently tease them out holding them by a leaf and not the stem and replant into individual modules of seed compost. Keep lightly moist but not waterlogged. Allow the plants to acclimatize to the outdoor temperatures gradually. Plant outside when the weather is warmer and when the roots have filled the modules.

Tip - If you are new to growing from seed or have left it a bit late then look for ready to grow plug plants at the garden centre or nursery.

Tip - You can grow most rudbeckias easily from seed but for flowers the same season or the following year, choose annual and biennial types.

Growing Needs

Rudbeckias originate from the plains of North America and grow well in rich, well-drained soil. They are pretty laid back and don't need lots of care and attention. Ensure that the plant's root ball is soaked overnight before planting and keep the surrounding soil or compost moist especially while the roots are establishing and in hot/dry weather. Feed your plants with a high potash plant food and deadhead regularly.

Tips

- For pots and containers choose multi flowered or more compact varieties with lots of individual flowers.
- Perennial rudbeckias last for several years and will die back to ground level for the winter and regrow from the crown in spring.
- Perennial rudbeckias will create a clump that establishes and becomes a dramatic source of border colour for summer after summer.
- Established clumps can be lifted and divided in spring into smaller clumps. These can be replanted in other parts of the garden.



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rudbeckia

The central boss of the flower has dozens of tiny nectaries, each one full of the sweet sugary attractant that acts as a magnet for these ephemeral creatures.

Tip - To support your garden pollinators choose the open single flowered varieties that enable easier access to the pollen and nectar.

LATE SEASON

One of the main benefits of growing rudbeckias is their flowering period. These sunny plants start flowering as many other summer garden favourites start to fade. This makes them an excellent choice for late summer interest in the garden. They are prolific flowerers and will keep blooming right into the autumn and sometimes into winter too. You can plant them into mixed containers to ensure a continuous display, or into your garden borders to fill gaps where earlier flowering spring bulbs may have been. Rudbeckia flowers are ideal for cutting and last well in a vase of water. Pick a few flowers and mix them with sprigs of garden foliage for an impromptu gift when visiting or to create an uplifting display for a dressing table or bathroom.

Tip - To keep your plants flowering remove the spent flower heads and feed them with a high potash plant food.

