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The Seduction of Summer Blooms

Flamers in the garden

As the temperature rises from warm to hot, my interest in colors does the same. I have been well aware of this fact for the past couple of years. It has become something that I like to joke about with my plant friends. Like clockwork, when the mercury hits the 82-degree mark, I want bright, flaming-hot, red-orange flowers. I warn my friends when entering a nursery not to let me walk out with every orange blooming plant I see. I have been seduced by some of these flaming hotties before, only to be disappointed by some. Now when I get all hot and sweaty, there are a few bright flowers that I know I can really count on. As always, there are some new ones, too.

Right when our first heat wave strikes, one of my favorite perennials starts to put on its best show. With traffic-stopping orange flowers that seem to never quit, the genus *Zauschneria* makes the hot days of summer oh so much better in the garden.



Get Dirty with Dan
BY DAN YOUNG

available at retail nurseries. At the moment, my personal favorite might be *Z. septentrionalis*, "Mattole Select." It has exceptionally silver leaves and a low growing habit. I suggest checking the height and spread of each variety because they can vary greatly. Most *Zauschnerias* you find will have

an orange to red flower and silver or gray leaves. They attract tons of hummingbirds and are fully drought-tolerant once established. How do you like that?

A new up-and-coming star in the garden world is the orange *Echinacea*. Only introduced a few years ago, it has won the hearts of gardeners all over the country, including at least a few of us here in Portland.

I have to be totally honest. I have yet to plant one, but I am only waiting to find the right place. I can, however, say that I have it from two good sources that *Echinacea* "Sundown" is a really good garden plant. I'm convinced. I have grown *Echinaceas* before and have found them to be near no-brainers.

There are reasons why plants become "classics," and I can understand why *Echinacea* falls into this category. They can tolerate almost any garden soil but perform the best with rich, evenly-moist soil. *Echinacea* can also stand some short periods without water and still look fine. It can handle full sun to part shade, and long after the petals have fallen off, the seed cones still look good.

E. "Sundown" grows to nearly 3 feet tall and about half as wide. The attention-grabbing orange flowers have just the slightest touch of pink. The overall effect is a very rich, intense color that you can't

pass by. As with all *Echinaceas*, the flowers are great cut and attract their share of butterflies.

Perhaps by this fall I will have figured out just the right place to have my very own orange *Echinacea*. But by the time November rolls around, I will probably have forgotten all about the colors that compete with a 90-degree day. I will be wondering what color goes best with the first frost of the year. Eww, shame on me for even mentioning the f-word. **TD**

To reach DIRTY DAN, who will answer any and all of your gardening questions, simply e-mail dirtythegardener@yahoo.com.



Zauschneria produces traffic-stopping flowers that compete with summer temperatures.

This is one of those times when you should take my advice and run out to get some. I find *Zauschneria* so useful in the garden. In the past, I have used it in more tropical-looking plantings to fire things up. I have seen it used en masse on hillsides. It works itself nicely into mixed borders, and it is more than happy to be planted in a dry garden.

There are two rules that I have found helpful when using this plant. One, avoid planting it where another plant might crowd it from above. Two, don't water it from above. Both of these things can cause it to flop over. This makes for a sad-looking plant and gardener.

There are a number of species and cultivars

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