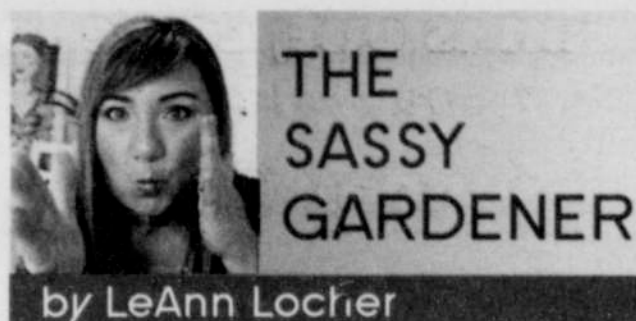


Grow your own pageant of princess-worthy blooms.

There's so much buzz about vegetable growing this year, but I started gardening as an adult for beauty, not food. The lusciousness of having flowers available just outside my door to create big, beautiful, cascading bouquets was a driving force. It may have helped that at the time, Martha Stewart was an influence everywhere, and my budget couldn't afford the sorts of arrangements she fashioned. So I grew my own.

Growing flowers to cut is still a primary reason why I garden. But I have a confession to make. Once I've coaxed these plants to produce, I have a hard time cutting their blooms. I know it's crazy, but come on. How many other gardeners are the same way? (I see you raising your hands.) Now that I've admitted this secret, I'll share my favorite flowers from which to make bouquets — because I'm not crazy all of the time, just sometimes. Here's the pageant of flowers for bouquets — as sorted in drag queen categories...

Miss Classique: Fragrant heirloom roses. I'm not talking about the fussy hybrid teas that have no scent. I mean the old-fashioned roses like Moss, Portland, Musk, and Damask. These roses are both cloyingly sweet in sentimentality and scent, and decadent in a bouquet. Add some wisteria dripping along the edges and you have a display worthy of Auntie Mame.



THE SASSY GARDENER

by LeAnn Locher

Miss Exotic Universe de'Lilies: Lilies. Lucky for you, this classic cut flower is easy to grow. And even more fortunate for you is the Lily Garden in Vancouver, Washington. I spoke with Judith Freeman there recently: I'm a fan of her 8-foot tall Orienpet lily, "Scheherazade," of which I grow several, and she recommended its fragrant cousin, "Quintessence," and the ever-popular "Silk Road." Do you have lilies in your garden? You should. Visit Judith at lilygarden.com and support your local grower.

Miss Simple Summer Blooms: Zinnias and dahlias. I'm not so sure my dahlias are coming back this year, and if they don't show up soon, I'm sewing zinnia seeds in their place. I've got my eyes on "Green Envy" and "Zowie! Yellow Flame" zinnias this season, and their unexpected colors from an easy-to-grow, summer-blooming annual. The great thing about zinnias is that you grow them from seed, sewn directly into the ground



The Orienpet lily "Scheherazade" is a showstopper in the garden and also lovely as a cut flower

come late May. I've been known to plant them as late as June and am rewarded with late summer blooms until frost. Arrange dahlias or zinnias, in their array of colors, in a canning jar and you have a slice of sweet, old-time summer. Pass me the watermelon.

Ms. I Smella Wonderful: Gardenias

and lilacs. The simplicity of creamy, white gardenia blooms floating in a small round bowl on a tabletop, the air infused with their tropic scent. Can it get any better? Some might say lilac is a better odor, and certainly easier to grow in the Pacific Northwest. But bunches of lilac massed in vases in late spring can almost overpower your sense of smell. Remember to hammer the ends of your cut lilacs' woody stems before placing them in a vase. By splaying the ends out, you allow the flowers to take in water and prevent the blooms from drooping.

Ms. Everlasting: Hydrangea. I think hydrangeas are pretty cool for many reasons, including their range of color tones from early-to-late season. But they're particularly breathtaking as a dried, everlasting flower. My "Nikko Blue" blooms turned an antique green late in season, and when cut and brought in before the first freeze, were able to dry as-is in jars and vases. I've enjoyed them all winter long. If you cut hydrangeas for fresh displays, just pass the cut stem over a lighter or flame to prevent early exhaustion for those gorgeous flowers.

LEANN LOCHER is an avid organic gardener in North Portland and an OSU Master Gardener intern. She loves to hear from other gardeners at sassygardener@gmail.com.

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