

ANNUALS BRIGHTEN NATIVE GARDENS

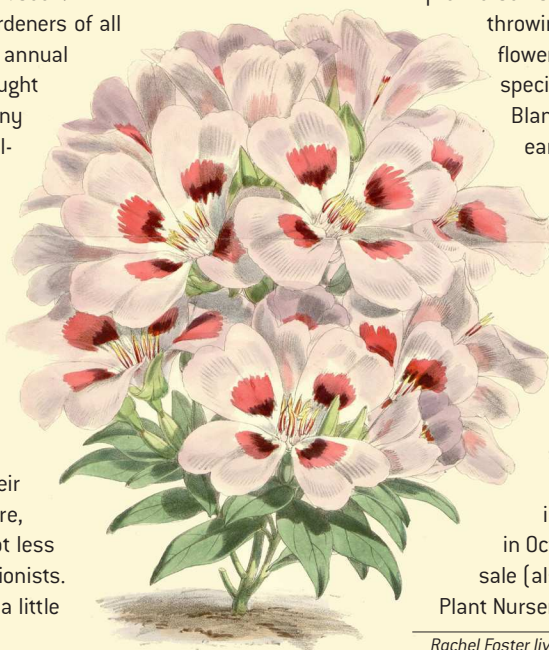
PLANT AT THE RIGHT TIME AND LET NATURE TAKE OVER

Annuals rarely get a mention in books and articles on gardening with native plants. That's too bad, because a succession of annual species can add a lot of color to your springtime garden, and attract pollinators, too. Flourishing plants of farewell-to-spring (*Clarkia amoena*) can bloom for many weeks — a happy thing, because it's one of the showiest natives we have, and an eager self-sower. Mine escaped into a well-watered blueberry patch last year, providing months of gorgeous rose-pink flowers on bushy plants, not to mention abundant seed.

California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) is well-known to gardeners of all stripes. It is, strictly speaking, a perennial but can be treated as an annual — and a prolific one, at that. Thanks to a taproot, it has good drought tolerance and can continue blooming well into summer, when many annuals have pooped out. Naturally occurring forms are generally yellow or orange, but satiny white or cream forms as well as red have been selected and are available as seed.

Large-flowered collomia (*Collomia grandiflora*) can be almost too prolific, and the bloom is relatively fleeting. The phlox-like flowers are an unusual shade that one grower describes as peachy salmon. If you are less fond of the plant, you might call it beige. Personally, I like it. Plants in decent soil are robust and branching, about 20 inches high.

Rosy plectritis (*Plectritis congesta*) is a little plant for sunny places that are damp in spring. Patches of plectritis make a spectacular display for a short time, by virtue of the clear bright pink of their flowers. Some other short-lived wetland denizens of similar stature, such as popcornflower and a small-flowered forget-me-not, are a lot less showy and probably of interest mostly to insects and restorationists. Delicate baby blue-eyes (*Nemophila menziesii*) likes moisture and a little shade, and shows up in woodlands as well as meadows.



Clarkia amoena

Globe gilia (*Gilia capitata*), also known as bluefield gilia, has fuzzy heads of tiny, light-blue flowers that are adored by butterflies and other pollinators. The stems reach about 10 inches in my yard. In the wild I most often see globe gilia on mid-elevation rocky outcroppings, but it seems to adapt quite well to ordinary gardens.

The hardy, deep-green leaves of American winter cress (*Barbarea orthoceras*) are edible and rich in vitamin C. This is a biennial, technically, and its robust rosettes are visible all winter. A prolific self-sower, barbarea is welcome as one of first forbs to bloom in spring, throwing up vertical stems adorned with numerous small, chrome-yellow flowers. The various forms of candy flower and miners lettuce (claytonia species) are equally early and equally edible, and even more prolific. Blankets of succulent candy flower can squeeze out other annuals, but the early show of small pinky white flowers is a pleasure all the same. Candy flower likes shade.

An easy way to establish annuals on a small scale is to acquire growing plants before or during bloom, plant them where you would like them to seed, water well until after bloom and then let nature take its course. If you buy seed, ask the seller when best to sow it and whether the seed needs special treatment beforehand.

Sources? I've bought quite a few annuals from Shari Cappel-Fisher of Willamette Wildlings. She offers online seed sales and will be selling potted plants at the Willamette Valley Hardy Plant Group sale at the Lane County Fairgrounds May 7. She also expects to bring seed packets and bare-root bulbs to the Master Gardeners' Fall Festival in September as well as Mount Pisgah Arboretum's Mushroom Festival in October. You should find a few annual natives at the Buford Park Nursery sale (also on May 7). Other native plant nurseries, including Doak Creek Native Plant Nursery, generally list some annuals. ■

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LANE COUNTY PROPAGATION FAIR

The 2016 Lane County Propagation Fair will take place from 11 am to 4 pm Saturday and Sunday, March 26-27, at the old Whiteaker School, now the Whiteaker Head Start Building, 21 N. Grand Street. There will be outdoor workshops on a variety of topics on Sunday, March 27.

This free annual event aims to promote local food security by supporting home orchardists, vegetable gardeners and native plant enthusiasts in and around the southern Willamette Valley.

You are not required to bring anything to participate, but attendees are strongly encouraged to contribute clearly

labeled cuttings or divisions of fruit trees and berries to share freely with others at the fair, as well as fresh seed, plants and divisions of all types of food crops and native plants.

This lively educational event is for you — and it depends on your contributions. From the Facebook page: "This is a free volunteer-driven event by interested people like you! Please consider a hands-on role supporting this wholly grassroots effort to identify, collect, share and propagate the finest food germplasm in the West. Your active involvement is crucial not only to the success but survival of this unique, visionary

effort." Contact the volunteer coordinator at (425) 444-7773.

Along with free seed, hundreds of varieties of fruit tree scion (grafting cuttings) for apple, pear, plum, cherry, Asian pear, peach, fig and grape will be on offer. Fruit tree rootstock will be available for \$3 each, with professional grafters donating time to graft the fruit variety of your choice to root stock for a custom tree. The focus is on great-tasting fruit varieties with proven performance in our growing region.

A list of speakers and workshops can be found on Facebook. Look for Lane County Propagation Fair.

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