

Midsummer garden offers possibilities



Carla
Keast

AROUND THE YARD

The midsummer garden is probably the easiest time to plan for. Everything's green, and not yet overgrown, tired, or spent. How much better can it get?

Additional flower colour is almost optional. But for those who hanker for a bit of carefree colour, there are lots of low maintenance perennials to choose from.

If you've got a sunny patch with average to dry soil, you can't go wrong with coneflower. It has a charming, exaggerated daisy shape with a big pincushion centre. The seed head is retained and makes for great winter effect. The native plant (*Echinacea purpurea*) is purple and readily available. If you like the shape but want colours, there are pink, white, and green varieties.

I suspect that flowering time is always a bit of a surprise for bee balm (*Monarda*). But it nonetheless decides to go ahead and toss out a few anyway. Its flowers are a mess! I love them, and so do the bees. Put it into full to partial sun with decent moisture and don't worry about it.

Hosta are grown primarily for their leaves which come in endless combinations of greens, blues, yellows, and whites coupled with all kinds of leaf textures. On



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Coneflower is an excellent choice for gardeners hankering to add a little bit of carefree colour.

top of all that leaf action, hosta also put out delicate, understated purple or white flowers. They're held well up above the leaves and add a bit of extra sparkle to the shady locations that hosta prefer. It will do well in moist to drier soils.

If you're not real fussy about big showy blossoms as a source of colour, astilbe is good choice. Planted singly, it will add a hint of colour; as a mass planting, they're like a painter's brush stroke of colour. The feather-like flowers come in red, pink, purple, and white. It prefers partial sun and moist soil.

In many ways the classic wallflower, globe cornflower (*Centaurea macrocephala*) tends to be overlooked in the

plant catalogues, nursery shelves, and even in the garden; until it flowers. At a height of almost a meter, it steps out of the background holding an impressive display of brilliant yellow spheres which it hangs onto for several weeks. It prefers full to partial sun and average moisture. It isn't widely available, but well worth the hunt.

There's lots of mid-summer flowering perennials to hanker for. Remember though, to never plant a perennial when it's in blossom.

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