

More blooms for all

by Barbara Aldinger, Native Plant Sale Committee Member

Pollinators need a steady supply of nectar and pollen from early spring through late fall. Gardeners also want lots of flowers all the time. Here are a few ideas to increase the blooms in your garden no matter what its size.

The general pattern for blooming is to begin in early spring in the shade, later in part sun, and peak in summer and fall in full sun. Use our bloom timelines for sun, part sun and shade to add plants that bloom at times different from most in an area. Low growing *Phlox subulata* and much larger *Amsonia* species are early bloomers for full sun. *Heuchera villosa* is a well behaved late bloomer for shade, while a mixed planting of white and blue wood asters (*Eurybia divaricate*/*Symphytotricum cordifolium*) provides blooms from August to October in a shady area where their spreading habit is not a problem. The large white blooms of *Hydrangea* can add midsummer interest in a shady area and the orange blooms *Rhododendron prunifolium* pop out in late summer.

How long a particular species blooms impacts the number of flowers in your garden at any point in the growing season. Both *Phlox stolonifera* and *P. divaricata* hold flowers much longer than most spring shade bloomers. *Rudbeckia* and *Coreopsis* species are dependable long bloomers in summer full or part sun. *Echinachia* and *Monarda* have a series of blooms on each plant.

A few species bloom more than once. Most notable is the groundcover Green-and-Gold (*Chrysogonum virginianum*) which blooms April to frost if it gets even an hour of sun. Look closely at the tiny bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*) and see individual flowers popping up even beyond the first frost. *Spigelia marilandica* (Indian pink) often blooms a second time in shade or part sun, especially if dead headed. *Stokesia laevis*, especially the blue cultivar "Peachie's Pick", will bloom two or three times over several months.

Techniques that require a little work to produce more blooms on some summer and fall bloomers are pruning and pinching back. It's why the New England Aster you purchase at a nursery in September is shorter, fuller and has more flowers than the plant in your garden. Each stem has been pinched back every 10-14 days, creating a lower, fuller plant. Cutting back Joe-Pye once will produce a shorter, fuller plant. To be sure you get late summer and fall flowers, stop pre-emptive pruning by July 4th.

People and pollinators want more flowers. Plants that are long blooming, that bloom more than once or that can be pruned or pinched back are marked on our bloom time lines available at the plant sale and on the [DNS website](https://www.delnature.org).

