

## Cutting Gardens -- for the Do-It-Yourself Floral Arranger – June, 2008

Summer is finally here and flowers can be seen blooming throughout the neighborhoods of northern Nevada. For the perennial gardener this is the time of year to add to, pamper and enjoy the blooms in her cutting garden.

What is a cutting garden? A cutting garden is a place to grow a variety of flowers that can be brought inside to arrange in your own vases and decorate your home with Nature's fabulous colors, shapes, textures and fragrances. It's an ideal way to further enjoy your landscape indoors.

The first step in planning a cutting bed is to select the right location in your yard – one that has a minimum of 5 hours of sun per day. The second step is to amend the soil with organic materials so that it drains well and has lots of nutrients in it. In the Great Basin, the addition of drip irrigation is a necessity.

The next step to a successful cutting garden is to select a variety of flowers that will bloom throughout the growing season. An ideal cutting garden has attractive foliage and flowers that bloom in succession from spring through fall, constantly providing new textures, colors, shapes and seasonal interest. There are also many varieties of annuals that can be planted as borders or as fillers among the perennials to give extra pizzazz. Selecting ones that make good cut flowers will extend your flower selection.

This starter plant list should inspire your palette – use it as you walk through your local independent garden center or browse through catalogues to become familiar with their characteristics and bloom time. Each offers a range of colors and sizes.

Aster	Daisies	Liatris	Peonies	Lavender
Catmint	Delphinium	Lupines	Penstemons	Rosemary
Coneflower	Iris	Lilies	Salvias	Rudbeckia
Salvia	Yarrow	Euphorbia	Artemesia	
Sunflower	Veronica	Tulips	Baby's Breath	
Daffodils	Roses	Allium	False Indigo	

Roses by themselves offer an enormous selection of cut flowers and can easily be included in a cutting bed. Mixing different colors, shapes and sizes of roses will add interest and structure to your cutting garden. There are several types of roses available – groundcover roses, floribundas, grandifloras, hybrid teas, climbing & shrub roses and formal tree

roses. And they are now being bred to be disease-resistant and withstand our winters with ease. Maintenance is easier than ever. (Be sure to ask for disease-resistant varieties, bred on their own root stock for best results. Easy Elegance Roses, bred by world renown rosarian Ping Lim, feature these characteristics.) So don't be afraid of the beautiful blooms. Growing and maintaining roses is easy in our dry, sunny desert climate.

You can also consider including vegetables and herbs in your cutting bed. Don't forget that bulbs are always useful to extend your cutting bed floral display from early spring thru late fall.

Once you've purchased the plants, prepared the soil and have drip irrigation installed, you're ready to plant. Be sure to group the plants by their water and sun requirements.

After you have planted, it will be important to regularly monitor for pests and treat immediately. There are a variety of products, both chemical and organic, to deter/eliminate a variety of critters, insects and diseases. Consult your local garden center for advice. It is also important to regularly fertilize your plants.

When it's time to begin cutting your flowers, do so early in the morning. Take a bucket of lukewarm water so that you can place the cut stems immediately in the water to keep them fresh. Before arranging the flowers, re-cut the end of each stem and immerse in a vase or container filled with lukewarm water. (Be sure the vase is clean.)

New cultivars of perennial flowers and roses are introduced every year. An easy stroll through the aisles of your local garden center will open your eyes to the new colors and shapes available for your garden.

With all your flowers safely tucked into their new homes, you can now sit back and enjoy your new garden and view. Your cutting garden should bloom in drifts through the growing season, creating radiant color and interest until the first frost.