

# How to have a FABBY GARDEN

## PART VIII



### Annuals 101 – Why bother? Read on!

Sometimes when folks visit our nursery for the first time, they'll say "Where are your perennials? – I'm only interested in perennials. I NEVER plant annuals – so quick to die and who wants to plant new ones every year – that's so expensive and so much work – why bother really" and so on and so on. Well! Of course, I nod approvingly, the customer is always right – hee-hee! And maybe at some point I try to slip in a word about how our annuals are quite different from the annuals I'm guessing she is talking about. Perhaps, dear reader, you too have shunned what's often considered the too ephemeral nature of some of some of my most favorite, wonderful and profuse bloomers in the gardening world. Allow me a chance to argue at least two misconceptions and tout a bit of their useful and garden-enhancing qualities.

**Annuals die and never return.** Well yes, that might be true with so many hybridized and **sexually sterile**, mass market "box store" annuals. BUT, gardening friends, let's just think about it. How do plants reproduce in nature? They certainly don't drop

down from the sky. After being pollinated by insects or birds, and after the flowers fade, they drop or disperse their seeds for the next generation. And this can easily happen in your own garden. You plant one *Orlaya* or one *Coreopsis tinctoria* this year and you'll find 10 or more popping up next season when the seeds germinate in your garden. For free!

**They bloom for such a short time.** Yes, again, that can definitely be true when you buy plants that have been in bloom for weeks at garden centers and weeks before that at the growers. They've been sprayed with growth regulators (height stunters) to keep them from overgrowing their pots, so they may look like new plants when in fact, they may be quite old. Often times, they really are just about finished blooming when our friend takes them home and plants them in the ground only to see them put out their last flowers before fading away.

When you plant open pollinated (non-hybridized) and non-sterile annuals **while they are small**, before they bloom, your plants will achieve proper size. You'll get to enjoy the entire natural bloom season from beginning to end, which can last for months or more – especially if you remove spent flowers (deadheading) or even better, cutting some for mood enhancing and charming bouquets for your kitchen table. Since almost all of our annuals are open-pollinated, you also



The many faces of *Coreopsis tinctoria* ssp. *radiata* 'Tiger Stripes'

extend your bloom season, or cut plenty of flowers to bring indoors. If you're planting in containers, I recommend you don't overcrowd them (like you see in many magazines). One or two plants in a good-sized container (10-15 gallons) will give you the best show. Want to insure that your annuals self-sow or learn how to collect seed? **Check out our short tutorial online!**

**For more fun and useful garden tips - read *How To Have a Fabby Garden parts I-VII* on our website!**

get to enjoy natural variations – a thrill for so many of us garden geeks. Not all seedlings will look exactly alike and some varieties are just natural born non-conformists. Look at profuse blooming *Coreopsis tinctoria*. At one point, sub-species *Coreopsis tinctoria* ssp. *radiata* 'Tiger Stripes' showed up in the horticultural world (left) and surprise – it's chock full of fascinating and fun variations. (This is also how new varieties are selected). And surprises along with novelty are a totally important source of our gardening joy – don't you agree? Self-sowing annuals famously pop up in garden spots where they are most happy (as opposed to where you planted them), creating new and fortuitous color combinations you never would have thought of. Self-sowers have more than once taught me a thing or two about color design.

Most of all, we love our self-sowing annuals for their prolific bloom. Putting all their heart into being pollinated in a single year makes them extreme show-offs in the garden, always seeming to steal the spotlight. You fall in love but never have to miss them terribly – they'll be back, year after year, as fresh, brand new seedlings!

Annie

### **Calceolaria mexicana "Lemon Drop Calceolaria" NEW!**

Pretty, emerald green foliage, attractive, bushy habit and hundreds of terribly cute, brightest lemon-drop yellow, balloon-like flowers over a long period make this super fast-to-bloom annual a fun and vibrant choice for a shady spot and perfect for a patio or front-steps container (3+ gal). To 2' x 2'. Rich soil. Self-sows freely. Sun (coast)/Bright shade. Avg. water. Annual. All zones. #171 \$4.95



### **Anagallis monellii "Blue Pimpernel"**

Bright gentian blue 1" flowers with a surprising pink eye and bright yellow anthers literally smother this striking front of the garden annual or dry garden perennial. Neat and compact, it grows to 10" tall and 20" across and is stunning combined with contrasty blooms and foliage like *Ursinia anthemoides* and *Heuchera 'Marmalade'* (p. 8). Thrives with little or no water after established and self-sows! **Deer resistant!** Sun. Avg./Low water. Perennial USDA zones 9-11, annual elsewhere. #42 \$5.95



### **Ursinia anthemoides "Solar Fire"**

**Serious bang for your buck!** Floriferous, fast and easy, it's amazing this South African annual isn't more popular. Quickly growing to 15" x 15", it *explodes* into a mass of sunny golden-orange blooms that last for months. With a shiny maroon ring encircling a golden eye, the 2.5" flowers are eye-catching atop a dense mound of soft-to-the-touch, ferny foliage. Heat and drought tolerant once established, it will self-sow for many return engagements! Great in a container at least 10" across. Rich, well-drained soil for best show. Sun. Avg./Low water. Annual. All zones. #1076 \$4.95



### **Orlaya grandiflora "Minoan Lace"**

Providing a most enchanting effect with its large and lacey purest white flowers – *every cottage garden must include "Minoan Lace!"* Bright green lush ferny foliage and loads of 4-5" blooms floating atop the sturdy branching stems can really tie a garden together – or at least put the "cottage" in your cottage! Tough, easy, fast and fun, it self-sows readily, providing free plants, once, twice, sometimes three times a year in mild climates like ours. Sun/Pt. Sun. Avg./Low water. Annual. All zones. #1261 \$4.95



### **Convolvulus tricolor "Blue Ensign"**

Riveting, totally technicolor 2.5" royal blue blooms with flashy, starburst centers make a garden come alive, especially as you get so many! Held in profusion for months on trailing stems, it's great in containers (imagine them in a pot on your front steps) and merrily combines with the lime green foliage of *Tanacetum parthenium 'Aureum'* (online). To 12" x 36". Self-sows! Full sun. Avg. water. Annual. All zones. #277 \$4.95

*A dizzying array of delightful annuals online!*