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# LATE BLOOMERS

*Extend the 'season of color' with late bloomers in the garden*

by MARTY JONES

**E**VEN THOUGH IT'S AUGUST, the Vail gardening and landscaping season is far from over, and late-blooming perennials can extend the beauty of your gardens into the fall. Gardeners often gravitate toward planting perennials that bloom during June and July, buying what's currently in color while forgetting that it's possible to have nice, bright blooms into September and October. This approach can lead to a lackluster appearance later in the season, but planting late bloomers can be a way to remedy this common gardening pitfall.

Late bloomers, most simply, are plants that mature throughout the summer season and then produce a color burst in late summer or early fall. Late-blooming perennials often look good as they mature, adding green foliage and textural interest to a garden even when they're not in bloom. But they look great when they finally pop open into colorful blooms late in the season when a garden needs a color boost the most.

Strategically choose late bloomers to enhance your garden all season long and display color that can act as a color bridge into



the beautiful fall season. While many perennial plants bloom in the late-summer or early-fall months, here is a select list of our favorites for the Vail area:

**SHASTA DAISY 'BECKY'**  
(*Leucanthemum x superbum*  
'Becky')

The phrase "happy daisy" can easily be applied to this perennial plant showcasing robust white blooms with yellow centers that offer a classic look to Vail gardens, where they grow well into the fall. Shasta daisies have strong stems, which make them great for cut flowers.



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**HUMMINGBIRD TRUMPET**  
*(Zauschneria garrettii*  
*'Orange Carpet,' or Epilobium*  
*canum garrettii)*

This plant, often simply called Zauschneria, has bright orange, trumpet-shaped blooms that attract hummingbirds. It takes the form of a low-growing groundcover, spreading and cascading beautifully over rocks and other landscape features. While you'll enjoy this plant's bold color into the fall, you'll also certainly love watching the hummingbirds it attracts zip through your garden.

**BLACK-EYED SUSAN** (*Rudbeckia fulgida 'Goldsturm'*)

With bright yellow blooms and dark brown or black centers, the black-eyed susan provides classic fall colors to Vail gardens, where it grows as a low-maintenance plant that attracts butterflies.



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The black-eyed susan also has sturdy stems, making it a good choice for cut flowers.

**PURPLE CONEFLOWER**  
(*Echinacea purpurea*)

Purple coneflower is a water-wise plant that is beloved for its daisy-like, purple-pink flowers and spiny center cone. This long-blooming perennial also attracts bees and butterflies, making it a great choice for those who like a lively garden full of pollinators.

**RUSSIAN SAGE** (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)

Through the summer, Russian sage grows beautiful green foliage on silvery stems until the late-summer season when its tiny purple blooms begin bursting open. This shrub-like plant thrives in the Vail-area's high and dry climate, and its aromatic scent deters deer. With woody stems, this plant is hardy well into the cool fall season.

While these plants all offer

great late-season color to Vail gardens, grasses can also add fall--and even winter—interest to a landscape. Grasses don't have colorful blooms like most perennial plants, but their varying shapes and forms can add movement with the wind in addition to their fine textures and colors that include shades of blue, green, tan and brown.

Instead of settling for a dull fall garden, choose a variety of these bright, late-season bloomers in addition to grasses for ongoing visual interest and variety in your Vail landscape.

**HOLLYHOCKS** (Genus: *Alcea*)

Hollyhocks grow with long, columnar stems that can reach 5 or 6 feet high, and their showy blooms range in color from yellow to pink to deep purple. Just when other Vail garden flowers are losing their color, hollyhocks will rise above them all and provide just the right amount of color to keep things lively through the fall. [vma](#)



Marty Jones is the owner and manager of Colorado Alpines & Wildflower Farm in Edwards. Marty has lived in the Vail area since 1973, and his work with Colorado Alpines & Wildflower Farm has inspired extraordinary landscapes and gardens in the Vail Valley and beyond. Marty can be reached at [marty@thewildflowerfarm.com](mailto:marty@thewildflowerfarm.com).

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