

**Transition Season Annuals**  
**Plant List 8**  
**HORT 308/609 Spring 2012**



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**Assigned Readings**  
**for Plant List 8**

Read the pages in your textbook associated with the family descriptions and individual taxa covered on Plant List 8 that was distributed in lab. These plant lists are also available on the course website.

<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/syllabi/308/home/frameset.htm>

**Transition Season Annuals**

- Best adapted to spring and fall conditions
- Most are intolerant of mid-summer heat and mid-winter cold
- Many Midwestern summer annuals can function as transition season annuals for us in the Southern U.S.
- Bridges the true summer and winter annuals



High end annual color plantings often need three to four color changes / year in our region

**Ageratum houstonianum**  
**Mexican Ageratum**

- Mostly short 6" to 10" tall transition season annual bedding plants
  - Wild type to 36"
- Dark green dense foliage
- Tends to stall in summer
- Blue, purple, pink, or white flowers



**Amaranthus tricolor**  
**Joseph's Coat**

- Effective transition or short term warm season summer annual; life cycle is too short to go from spring to frost in our region
- Classic old-time favorite with resurgent popularity



**Amaranthus tricolor**  
**Joseph's Coat**




- Spectacular to scraggly depending upon the site and cultivar selected; reseeds & can become weedy
- Showy portion of the plant is new growth, not flowers: color varies from yellow, orange to red
- Plant in fertile well-drained soil, sunny location, irrigate, and fertilizer regularly to maintain lush vigorous new growth; pinching encourages lateral branches
- Sometimes known as "Summer Poinsettia"



## *Aquilegia × hybrida* Columbine

- Herbaceous perennial (USDA z. 4-7) or reseeding annual (z. 8 and warmer)
- Delicate 1' - 3' rounded mound of blue-green parsley-like foliage
- Wide color range of five-petaled flowers with rear projecting spurs, mid- to late spring
- Foliage typically dies to the ground in summer, best in partial shade, declines more quickly in full sun
- Needs moist well drained soils, leaf minors & borers can be serious pests



## *Aquilegia chrysantha* var. *hinckleyana* Hinckley's Columbine

- Similar in to *Aquilegia × hybrida*, but more vigorous in much of Texas than hybrid columbines; useful in USDA z. 7 – 9 (10a)
- Flowers pale to rich golden yellow
- More reliably perennial, or at least more reliably reseeding, than *A. × hybrida* for Texas
- The cultivar 'Texas Gold' has darker golden flowers than the species, an official Texas Superstar®
- Requires vernalization for vigorous flowering



## *Celosia cristata* Celosia

- Transition season annual in SW USA, summer annual in cooler climates
- Valued for plume-like (feathery) or contorted fuzzy brain-shaped (cockscomb-like) flower panicles of long lasting blooms in warm color ranges
- Effective spring to early summer, can be used again in fall; tends to stall in mid-summer heat



## *Celosia cristata* Celosia

- Dwarf types 6" tall for edging & bedding, taller types to 3' for massing and cut/dried flowers
- Old-fashion stains / cultivars more heat tolerant and can be effective in Texas' summers
- Deadheading may encourage secondary panicles to develop
- Average soils are acceptable, requires irrigation



## *Centaurea cyanus* Bachelor's-Button

- European wildflower/agronomic weed (Cornflower) cultivated in cottage homestead gardens for centuries
- Strongly upright grower; tough stems = Hurt-sickle; long flower stalks; deadhead to prolong bloom
- Flowers resemble old-fashion cloth buttons; white, pink, pale to dark blue, purple, maroon
- Surprising cold tolerance



## *Centaurea cyanus* Bachelor's-Button

- Grows in wide range of soils on sunny sites; extensively naturalized; used in wildflower mixes
- Mixed annual/perennial borders; cut flower gardens; great for children and novice gardeners



## *Cleome hassleriana* Spider Flower

- Transition or summer annual; growing season is too long for it to last from spring to frost in our region
- Bold texture foliage provides a good foil for delicate spidery flowers and seed capsules
- Flowers white, pink, to purple in racemes above the foliage
- Deadhead to encourage return bloom



## *Cleome hassleriana* Spider Flower

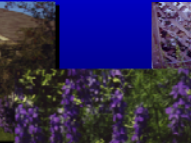


- Foliage is prickly, sticky, & fetid; avoid contact with pedestrians
- Easily grown in most soils in a sunny location
- Southern and Midwestern heritage gardens; coarse accent in annual plantings
- Adds height to annual plantings

## *Consolida ambigua* Larkspur



- Old fashion wildflower or reseeding cool / transition season annual, now promoted as a fall planted annual
- Long spikes of blue, blue-purple, white, or pink flowers above bright green ferny soft textured foliage



## *Consolida ambigua* Larkspur



- Suitable for sunny sites with well drained soils
- **Do not consume, reportedly poisonous**
- Good cut flower, naturalizing, vertical accent

## *Coreopsis tinctoria* Plains Coreopsis

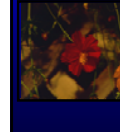
- Native annual wildflower
- Light feathery mound, 1' to 3' tall
- Daisy-like flowers, red center, red, yellow, or orange-red ray flowers, some two-tones, blooms late spring to early summer
- Good transition season annual, back of border, tends to become reseeding weed



## *Cosmos bipinnatus* Fern-Leaf Cosmos



- Vigorous fine textured ferny foliage
- Cut flowers, cottage and mixed annual / perennial gardens
- Delicate white, pink, red composite flowers
- Erect shrubby form, rapid grower, 5' - 8' tall
- Tends to suffer in mid-summer heat, reseeds
- Good kid plant, easy to grow from seeds




## *Cosmos sulphureus* Yellow Cosmos

- Similar to *C. bipinnatus*, but coarser foliage, smaller, 2' to 5' tall
- Yellow, orange to red-orange flowers
- Plays out in summer heat quicker than *C. pinnatus*



## *Helichrysum bracteatum* Strawflower

- Variable in form from compact dwarfs, <1', to erect cut flower taxa to 3' (4')
- Medium textured foliage with composite flowers appearing as if made of straw
- Rich variety of flower colors; pick just as buds are opening for drying, open for fresh use
- Cool, transition, warm season?




## *Helichrysum bracteatum* Strawflower

- Needs a sunny well drained site; prone to crown / root rots; better in low RH environments; avoid excess fertilization
- Edging, bedding, patio containers with dwarf forms; background, cut flower, heritage gardens with taller forms



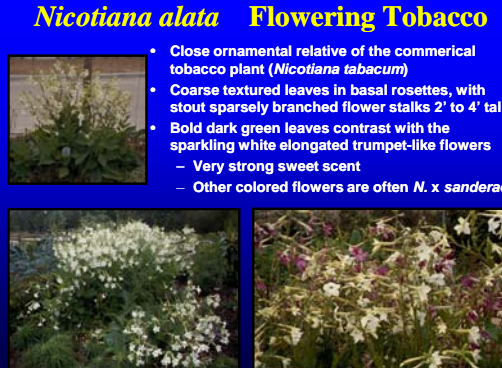
## *Lobelia erinus* Lobelia

- Represented in the trade mostly by small, 4"- 8" tall, spreading forms
- Fine texture foliage covered in stunning sky blue to violet blue, or sometimes white or pink flowers
- Blooms over an extended time
- In-between plant, lacks enough cold tolerance to be a strong cold season plant, but melts in summer heat
- Tolerates a range of soil types, but not drought tolerant
- Bedding, edging, formal designs, rock gardens, containers, hanging baskets



## *Nicotiana alata* Flowering Tobacco

- Close ornamental relative of the commercial tobacco plant (*Nicotiana tabacum*)
- Coarse textured leaves in basal rosettes, with stout sparsely branched flower stalks 2' to 4' tall
- Bold dark green leaves contrast with the sparkling white elongated trumpet-like flowers
  - Very strong sweet scent
  - Other colored flowers are often *N. x sanderae*



## *Nicotiana alata* Flowering Tobacco

- Sap of most *Nicotiana spp.* is poisonous
- Morning sun with afternoon shade is best, but overall a fairly tough plant; requires some irrigation & fertilization
- Viruses & greenfly can be problems; may reseed
- Scented garden, cool / transition cut flowers, massing, mixed borders, heritage, cottage, educational gardens



### *Pelargonium × hortorum* Geranium




- Rich green, often red water marked, foliage
- Subshrub intolerant to our summer heat; new more heat tolerant forms are in testing stages
- Clusters of red, pink, or white flowers above foliage; deadhead to encourage more blooms
- Avoid over-watering, shade in summer, treat as cool or transition season annual in Texas







### *Petunia × hybrida* Petunia



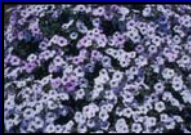


- Cool or transition season annuals in southern U.S., warm season cooler climates
  - Many decline in heat of Texas summer
  - A few heat tolerant releases are available for summer
- 6" to 18" tall rounded sprawling mounds or flattened carpets
- Trumpet to funnel-shaped flowers
  - Every color of rainbow, singles, doubles, bi-colors, large or small



### *Petunia × hybrida* Petunia

- Moist well drained fertile soils, sun/part shade, periodic shearing may rejuvenate
  - Several disease and insect problems; high N requirements
- Bedding, edging, containers, hanging baskets, formal and specialty designs

### *Calibrachoa spp.* Million-Bells

- Very close relative of *Petunia spp.*
- Weak evergreen perennials mostly used as cool or transition season (hot climates) or warm season (cold climates) annuals
- Hybrid cultivars offer broadly trumpet to bell-shaped flowers in a range of colors, very showy
- Low spreading or trailing habit, useful in containers, hanging baskets, window boxes, patio containers, bedding, edging
- Best with acidic moist, but well drained soils, regular fertilization, and sun to part shade








### *Phlox drummondii* Annual Phlox

- Texas wildflower that made big-time
- More erect in the wild in competition, rounded to spreading mounds in cultivation
- Vibrant to pastel red, pink, white, and bicolor flowers in cymose clusters above the foliage





### *Phlox drummondii* Annual Phlox

- Spring to early summer, tend to die out in summer heat or from spider mites; season long color in cooler regions
- Bedding, massing, naturalizing, containers, rock gardens, edging, detailed designs, short cut flower





Phlox Intensa Star Series



***Tagetes patula***  
**Dwarf French Marigold**

- Low (6" - 18") mounded transition annual
- Dark glossy green pinnately lobed leaves
- Yellow, orange, red-brown, maroon flowers
  - Singles and doubles, bi-colors, spring - frost
- Usually dies in Texas' summer heat
- Spider mites (bad in summer), botrytis, aster yellows, slugs
- Needs deadheading, all parts pungent aroma
- Edging, massing, bedding, formal designs







**Spider Mites Affect Many Taxa Including *Tagetes* & *Catharanthus***








***Tagetes erecta***  
**African Marigold**

- Taller 1'- 3' (5') coarser version of *T. patula*
- Can serve as border background or cut flower
- Often hybridized with *T. patula* to obtain intermediate sizes




***Tropaeolum majus* Nasturtium**

- Rounded 8" to 12" tall mound to sprawling weak 6' - 8' vine
- Cool to transition season annual, withstands mild frost; summer annual in cool climates
- Fresh-looking thickish nearly round peltate leaves, sometimes variegated white or cream

***Tropaeolum majus* Nasturtium**

- Flowers cup-shaped, spurred, creamy white, yellow, orange, pink to red; some are fragrant
- Sow directly on-site with day-long to morning sun; transplants poorly
- Avoid excess fertility; some wind & drought, but not heat tolerance
- Bedding or edging; cottage, herb, or container gardens; window boxes; low fences / lattice / walls / other structures


***Zinnia elegans***  
**Zinnia**

- Stiffly upright transition annual, 6"- 36" tall
- Attractive dahlia-like, button type, or cactus-flower inflorescences, spring to ?
  - Huge array of colors and sizes

Good as a fall transition plant





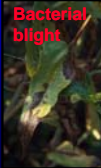


*Zinnia elegans*  
**Zinnia**

- Tends to melt in Texas' summer heat
- Powdery mildew, root rot, bacterial blight
- Cut flowers, bedding, edging (dwarf types)



Powdery mildew



Bacterial blight



Spider Mites

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