Transition Season Annuals

Plant List 8

HORT 308/609 Spring 2018

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

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

Ageratum houstonianum
Mexican Ageratum
- Mostly short 6” to 10” tall transition season annual bedding plants
  - Wild type to 36” comeback?
  - Sub Conoclinium coelestinum
- Dark green dense foliage
- Tends to stall in summer
- Blue, purple, pink, or white flowers

Ageratum
Wild type
**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 slender flower stalks  
- Deadhead to prolong bloom  
- Flowers resemble old-fashion cloth buttons; white, pink, pale to dark blue, purple, maroon  
- Surprising cold tolerance  

- 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  
- Can reseed; informal look

**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

- 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, often smaller, 2’ to 5’ tall
- Yellow, orange to red-orange flowers
- Plays out in summer heat quicker than *C. bipinnatus*; cut flowers; novice gardeners

**Helichrysum bracteatum**
Strawflower

- Variable in form from compact dwarfs, <1’, to erect cut flower taxa up to 3’ (4’) tall
- 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

**Osteospermum spp.**
African Daisy

- This weak African herbaceous perennial is used regionally as a cool or transition season annual; cold hardy in zone 9, but heat intolerant
- Well drained soil in sun / light shade; cut flowers, bedding, containers
- Daisy-like flowers in white, purple, mauve, yellow or orange
- Most cultivars dense, 8 – 12” tall, few serious insect/disease problems
**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; cover crop nematode suppression
- Needs deadheading, all parts pungently aromatic
- Edging, massing, bedding, formal designs

**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

**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 & sizes

Excellent as a fall transition plant

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

**Zinnia**

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

**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 sometimes call Summer Poinsettia

**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: new growth varies from yellow, orange, pink to red
- Plant in fertile well-drained soil, sunny location, irrigate, & fertilizer regularly to maintain lush vigorous new growth; pinching encourages lateral branches

**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 strains / cultivars may be more heat tolerant and can be effective in Texas’ summers
- Deadheading may encourage secondary panicles to develop
- Average soils are acceptable, requires irrigation

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**Aquilegia × hybrida**

*Columbine*

- Herbaceous perennial (USDA z. 4 - 7) or reseeding annual (z. 8 and warmer)
- Delicate 1’ - 3’ rounded mound of bright green to 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 and warm climates
- Needs moist well drained soils; leaf minors & borers can be serious pests

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**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, strongly spurred
- 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

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**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
- For reseeding plants must mature seeds

**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*

**Petunia × hybrida  Petunia**

- Cool or transition season annuals in southern U.S., warm season cooler climates
  - Most cultivars decline in Texas’ summer heat
  - A few heat tolerant releases are appropriate for summer use
- 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, full sun / part shade, fertilization and periodic shearing may rejuvenate
  - Several disease and insect problems; high N requirements
- Bedding, edging, containers, hanging baskets, formal and specialty designs

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**Calibrachoa spp.**

*Million-Bells*

- Very close relatives 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, or for bedding, edging
- Best with acidic moist, but well-drained soils, regular fertilization, and sun to part shade

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**Cleome hassleriana**

*Spider Flower*

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

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**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 USA heritage gardens; coarse accent in annual plantings
- Adds height to annual plantings
**Pelargonium × hortorum**
*Geranium*
- Rich green, often red water marked, foliage
- Subshrub intolerant to our summer heat; new more heat tolerant forms are in development
- 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

**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

**Tropaeolum majus**
*Nasturtium*
- Rounded 8” to 12” tall mound or 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 or vibrant yellow, orange, pink to red; some are fragrant
- Sow directly on-site with day-long to morning sun; transplants poorly
- Avoid excess fertility; limited wind & drought are ok, but not heat tolerant
- Bedding or edging; cottage, herb, or container gardens; window boxes; low fences / lattice / walls / other structures

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