

# Horticulture Hints

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Presented by Kathy Lingusky

Life at 9,000 feet in Colorado is definitely different than life in Florida. We arrived amidst heavy smoke pollution from wildfires in Alberta, Canada, and couldn't see my beloved mountains until it rained a couple days later. I'm re-acquainting myself with my sweater collection, waking up to outside temperatures in the mid-forties, and trying to remember which buttons to push on our very old but reliable microwave (they don't make them like they used to!).

The push to go to gardening with natives is happening here in Colorado as well as Florida. I imagine it's happening all over the country. And this is a very good thing. As more and more land is going toward housing (we all need to have a place to live, after all), our wildlife is being pushed into smaller and smaller portions of land. Bears are often a problem in suburban areas and mountain towns here. Deer, and occasionally elk, are also problems. If we stop planting deer and elk candy (aka munchie exotic perennials), there will be less difficulty in dealing with wildlife damage. Many of the native trees, grasses and wildflowers are either not of interest to the local animals, or are equipped to handle the damage.

Personally, I am trying to work my way through the Green Isle Gardens (Groveland, FL) perennial wildflower list, and have a few natives to which I can attest qualities. First on my list is the Stoke's aster (*Stokesia laevis*). It's probably the most reliable and beautiful bloomer that I have tried. If you deadhead regularly, it will bloom continuously May through September. If you choose not to deadhead, it will bloom in May, then again in August or September. Unfortunately, it likes moist, well drained soil, (well drained not a problem!) but I have placed mine where I can get water to them

often. I have never amended the soil, except when initially planted, and it has bloomed reliably. The purple, blue or white flowers, 2-4" across, are borne singly on a stalk 12-24" tall. They hover above a rosette of smooth, slightly lance-shaped leaves. The basal leaves form colonies rather quickly, and should probably be lifted every 2-4



Stoke's Aster

years, divided and replanted. Or shared!

Another native flower that I really love is starry rosinweed (*Silphium astericus*), so named because of the gummy or resinous substance on the stems. Native Americans chewed the stems to clean their teeth. This plant can take full sun or partial shade, and is drought and heat tolerant. It grows

naturally in pinewood flats, sandhills and disturbed areas such as roadsides. A deciduous perennial, it dies back completely in the winter, and comes back in early spring, blooming continuously from June through September. Bright yellow flowers with yellow centers, the plant can grow up to 5', with

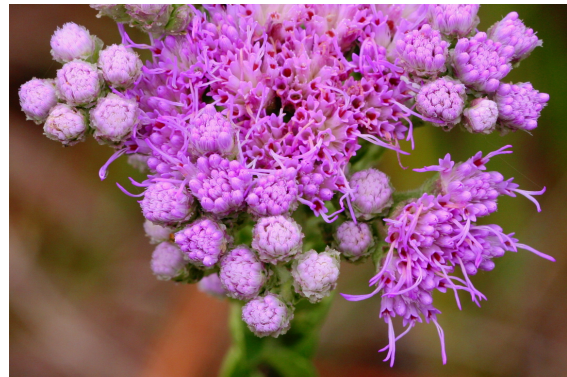


Starry Rosinweed

broad, smooth leaves. The flowers attract all kinds of pollinators, including bees and butterflies, and if the flowers are allowed to go to seed, provides food for birds.

A third favorite of mine is Florida paintbrush (*Carphephorus corymbosus*). And since purple is one of my favorite colors, this beautiful flower fits the bill. Also known as coastalplain chaffhead, it's a short-lived perennial that winters as a basal rosette, blooming from mid summer through fall. The flower stalks rise up to 3' above the basal

rosette, with tubular florets, each with a star shaped opening and long protruding stigmas. This gives the flower head a fuzzy appearance. They bloom best in full sun, but tolerate partial shade, and growing naturally in pine barrens and sand hills, prefers a well-drained sandy soil. The Florida paintbrush, also, is an important sources of nectar for pollinators. This plant propagates from seed, and the mature plant will grow "pups" which will fall and spread from the base of the plant. Propagation can also be done through root division. Tolerant of heat, they are



Florida Paintbrush

slightly drought tolerant, and will do best if watered occasionally when rains are slow to come.

I hope you all are having a wonderful summer with lots of relaxing and/or gardening time, whichever is your preference!