

Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture

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Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks and Home Horticulture is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to kemeryr7@frontier.com.

Rosebay Willowherb

I recently traveled to Scotland to visit friends – Annette and Michael Conway - whom I had not seen for 17 years, when my second wife Lynette and I traveled to Blackpool where they live. Annette and Michael wanted to meet in Scotland this time, which was an area they were less familiar with.

Scotland is an incredibly rugged region and traveling is slow, with narrow winding roads with mountains and forests on either side. I was intrigued by a tall plant with beautiful pink flowers that formed colonies along the roadsides in many areas. This intriguing plant was called rosebay willowherb.



Rosebay Willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*) is a tall wildflower that grows in a variety of habitats across the UK. It can be found in Boreal forests all over the world, including Canada, and Alaska. and parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. It is also found in Scotland and Iceland. It is supposedly even found in many areas in the northern and western regions of the United States- though I have never encountered it.

It is a herbaceous perennial plant that can grow up to 2 meters tall. The stems are erect, stout and hairy.

- The leaves are narrow, lanceolate shaped and arranged spirally up the stem. They have a blue-green color on the upper surface and are pale green underneath
- The flowers are pink to purple in color and are arranged in dense, elongated clusters at the top of the stem. Each flower has four petals. It flowers from June to September
- The fruit is a slender capsule that splits to release numerous tiny seeds with silky hairs. These aid wind dispersal of the seeds
- It spreads rapidly from an extensive creeping rootstock and colonizes disturbed ground quickly. It is one of the first plants to colonize areas after forest fires, giving it the common name fireweed.

The tall, pink flower spikes of Rosebay willowherb can often be seen crowding together in thick stands in open spaces, such as woodland clearings, roadside verges, grassland and waste ground. A successful colonizer, Rosebay willowherb has grown in number from a scarce woodland plant to a ubiquitous flower. This expansion occurred as a result of two World Wars clearing huge areas of forest and burning the ground in both town and countryside - just the right conditions for this plant to thrive in. One of its common names in the South East, 'Bombweed', alludes to this takeover.



Rosebay willowherb is able to colonize new areas because of its specially adapted seeds - fitted with tiny, cottony 'parachutes' they are able to disperse across long distances in the slightest breeze.

Where to find Rosebay Willowherb

- Wasteland – It thrives on disturbed, infertile ground and is often one of the first plants to colonize waste areas, railway sidings and industrial wasteland
- Woodland clearings – It grows well in open woodland glades and areas cleared of trees. Look for it along the edges and in sunny clearings
- Road verges – Frequently found growing on roadsides and motorway verges across Britain
- River banks – Often grows on the gravelly banks and floodplains of rivers and streams.
- Coastal habitats – Grows well on coastal cliffs, dunes, and shingle beaches around the UK coastline
- Upland moors – Found colonizing disturbed ground in upland moors and heathland across Britain
- Scotland and Northern England – Particularly abundant in Scotland, Northern England and Wales

There's not a lot of folklore about rosebay willowherb – perhaps it hasn't been around as a wild flower for long enough – but it's interesting to read of a superstition that warns against picking them, or a thunderstorm will ensue.

Apparently everyone around the village of Stonebroom – in Derbyshire - called them pit daisies as they used to grow on the disused pit tip. Pit tips are dirt hills found in waste areas.

In some areas, the floating seeds were called sugars by children and you got a wish if you caught one

In Russia where the plant also grows the flowers/leaves were traditionally used to make a drink. The plant blooms in the late summer with full bloom starting the beginning of autumn.

The plant was also called Bombweed or London's ruin or London's pride as it colonized areas heavily bombed in WW2.

Clydebank was bombed during the last war and one of the casualties was the Singer Sewing Machine factory. On the bomb site a profusion of rosebay willowherb sprang up which the locals called Singerweed.

Some folks say that Rosebay willowherb should not be picked, otherwise a thunderstorm will ensue, or, more horrifically, your mother will die.

Foraging rosebay willowherb has been a summer tradition in many parts of Europe for centuries. Known as Ivan Chai in Russia, it was traditionally harvested and dried to make a popular herbal tea.

The young shoots and leaves can be harvested in spring and early summer before the plant flowers. They have a sweet, mild flavor and can be eaten raw or cooked

The pink/purple flowers can be eaten raw when fully open from June to September. They have a sweet nectar flavor and look beautiful as a garnish or addition to salads



The small hairy seeds inside the long seed pods are edible from late summer through autumn. They have a nutty flavor and can be dried and ground into flour

The roots are starchy and can be boiled or roasted similar to potatoes when harvested in autumn or spring

The leaves and flowers can be dried to make an herbal tea. The young leaves have anti-inflammatory properties

The young shoots, leaves, flowers, seeds and roots are edible. The shoots and leaves can be eaten raw in

salads or lightly cooked. The flowers can be used as a colorful garnish. The roots can be roasted, boiled or ground into flour. The seeds can be dried and used like grain

The leaves and flowers can be dried and made into a tasty herbal tea. It has anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties

Traditionally used to treat skin conditions, heartburn, diarrhea and wounds. It has astringent, anti-inflammatory and antiseptic properties

The stems can be used to make strong natural cordage and the fluffy seed hairs used as tinder

A green dye can be obtained from the leaves and stems. The roots produce a pinkish dye

The nectar-rich flowers produce a light colored, flavored honey. Bees frequently forage on rosebay willowherb flowers

Often grown in gardens and parks for its attractive pink flowers that brighten up the summer months

The health benefits and medicinal use of Rosebay Willowherb

Wound healing – It has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties that help heal skin abrasions, burns, ulcers and other minor wounds when applied topically. The astringent tannins help stop bleeding and promote tissue repair

Skin conditions – Used to treat various skin conditions like eczema, psoriasis, rashes, acne and insect bites due to its anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial action



Urinary tract infections – The herbs' compounds may help fight bacteria and reduce inflammation in UTIs and prostate issues

Diarrhea – Rosebay willowherb has traditionally been used to treat diarrhea because of its astringent tannins that can help reduce intestinal inflammation and fluid loss

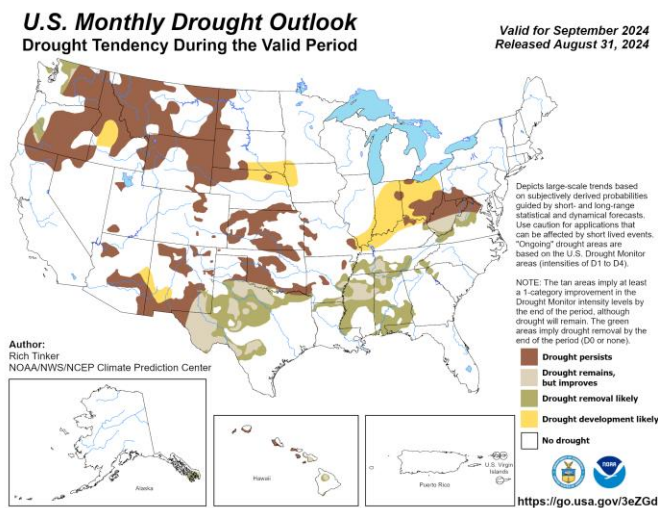
Antioxidant – The plant has high levels of antioxidant compounds like flavonoids, tannins and phenolic acids that can help protect cells from damage

Immune boosting – Some research indicates the plant may help stimulate immune cell activity to potentially help fight viruses and infections

Summary: This plant has a lot of interesting folklore and history and is much more than a common roadside plant. It certainly is a lovely plant in the fall in Scotland.

Drought Conditions in Fall

We have been behind on precipitation for most of the summer. It's tough on plants, as they generally require more moisture as the season progresses – just because they are bigger.



As the map indicates we are currently very dry and the tendency is for this to continue. This means that our water bills will continue to be high. Plants are very vulnerable to dry conditions and can suffer badly if they head into late fall and winter suffering from drought.

Remember that plants need about an inch of water per week to remain healthy. If you set a sprinkler to water a garden area, set out an empty tuna can to measure how much water actually is applied to an area. It takes a lot longer than one thinks to apply an inch of water to an area. One can also use a soil probe or hand trowel to dig down (at least six inches) to see if the soil is moist at that depth. If it is not keep watering until it is. If the soil is

moist at that depth, then you can stop watering until the soil once again is dry at that depth.

Mature trees are very resistant to dry conditions, so just worry about trees or shrubs planted this season. Usually about 5 gallons of water is needed for each plant per week to keep them healthy.

I always long for the transition from summer to fall – around mid to late September - usually marked by a period of heavy rainfall followed by much cooler temperatures as we transition to autumn.

Wheelchair Accessibility on Scottish Buses

Edinburg Scotland is a very busy city filled with tourists. The streets are full of pedestrians visiting all the shops that line the streets throughout the city. Buses are often used to travel around the city. I was impressed with the built in wheelchair ramps on the double decker buses, and separate areas on the bus to park my wheelchair as we traveled. It made getting around the city much easier.



Black -Eyed – Susan



To say Rudbeckias (Black Eyed Susan) are complex is an understatement. Many types exist in the trades and it is easy to be confused at all the names and choices. The genus name for all Black - Eyed-Susans is *Rudbeckia*. It's named for the Rudbecks, a very famous Swedish father and son both named Olof. Olof the Elder lived from 1630-1702 and was a world-famous scientist known mostly for his accomplishments in medicine (anatomy) and linguistics but was also known for studies in music and botany. Throughout his career, he had the strong support of Sweden's famous Queen Christina and was a celebrity at her court. He established the first botanical garden in Sweden, which was originally called Rudbeck's Garden.

His son, Olof the Younger (1660-1740) continued many of the father's studies, and became almost as famous in his time as a scientist and professor. One of his best-known students was another Swedish scientist, Carolus Linneaus, the man who devised our system of plant nomenclature. So it's no surprise that Linneaus gave the name "Rudbeckia" to this important group of plants. By the way, a hundred years after the establishment of "Rudbeck's Garden," it was renamed for Linneaus. And a modern descendant of the Rudbecks is Alfred Nobel,

originator of the Nobel Prizes. So it's safe to say that our lowly, common roadside "weed" has a very prestigious history.

All of the approximately 30 species of *Rudbeckia* are North American natives, making them a decidedly American (and Canadian) wildflower.

<i>R. hirta</i>	Biennial or Annual	Familiar roadside "weed" in all 50 states, to 3 ft.
<i>R. fulgida</i> var <i>sullivantii</i>	Perennial	Similar to above, to 3 ft, parent to most perennials.
<i>R. fulgida</i> var <i>speciosa</i>	Perennial	A shorter variety to 18" tall with 1 ½-3" flowers.
<i>R. lacinata</i>	Perennial	Tall with lemon-yellow drooping flowers. To 9 ft.
<i>R. nitida</i>	Perennial	Drooping gold flowers on plants 3-4 ft. tall.
<i>R. subtomentosa</i>	Perennial	Black-Eyed Susan with blunt petals. 4 ½ ft.

Rudbeckia hirta

This is the gorgeous gold wildflower you see everywhere growing on its own, often in great golden sheets of color along the highway, in unused fields, often in "disturbed ground" and maybe in your own backyard. Generations of American children have picked them in proud bouquets, and they figure importantly in our culture. With apologies to our Canadian neighbors, I've always thought it is the quintessential American wildflower, since it is so widespread and so common, yet so beautiful, it symbolizes the American ideal of opportunity for all, enjoyed and available to everyone from our earliest natives and settlers to every American child alive today..

Best of all, for gardeners, it's a snap to grow from seed, and is a staple of any good wildflower seed mixture.

However, the exact way it performs depends on where you live. It usually grows as a biennial, which means it takes two years to bloom from seed. Biennials live only two years, and bloom only in their second season, then die after reseeding heavily. However, in some regions, *R. hirta* grows as an annual, blooming the first year. In other areas, experts insist it's perennial.

In Northern regions *Rudbeckia hirta* is a classic biennial. From fall or spring seeding, it germinates quickly, forming a basal rosette of its signature "hairy" green leaves, and that's all it does. The elegant bloom stalks arise the second summer. In the south this species behaves more like an annual.



Many hybridizers tried to create a more-perennial plant from this popular wildflower. The most successful, and a sensation when it appeared, was The Gloriosa Daisy, introduced by the W. Atlee Burpee Seed Company in the 1950's. This strain, still widely grown from seed, creates a plant a bit larger than the common wildflower, with blooms that are totally different. First of all, the flowers are about three times the size of the wildflower's blooms—often 6" across. And "Gloriosas" are always a mixture of pure yellow and splashy bicolors, most with dark mahogany red splotches at the base of the petals, creating a stunning pinwheel effect. Others in the mix are fully double. But all the flowers are large, making the Gloriosa strain a big favorite. However, while the blooms are spectacular, the perennial qualities are weak. Most stands of Gloriosa Daisy will "run out" in about 2-3 years in a very cold climate, earning

them the dreaded name, "short-lived perennial."

The great confusion among the Rudbeckias arises from the fact that the native biennial (*R. hirta*) and an important hardy perennial species (*R. fulgida*) look almost exactly alike. So many laymen don't realize that the beautiful roadside "weeds" they see are botanically different from the long-blooming perennial clumps seen in almost all American perennial gardens—from home gardens to those "decorative plantings" at shopping malls and gas stations. They're everywhere, since the perennial Black-Eyed Susans are some of the most useful landscape plants of them all, when it comes to dependable every-year long-blooming mid-summer color.

R. fulgida is the native base for most of the hybridized perennial Black-Eyed Susans, and they descend from various "varieties" of the species. This means naturally occurring variations, but still the same basic plant. *Rudbeckia fulgida* has four recognized varieties, botanically introduced with the abbreviation, "*var.*" Here are the two important ones you may see at the garden center or in catalogs:

***Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm'**



This variety is the parent of the king of all the commercial perennials, a plant commonly called ***Rudbeckia* 'Goldsturm'**. That's German for "gold storm," and a gold storm it is. This fantastically successful perennial introduction, developed in Germany, is one of the most popular and widely planted flowering plants in America. The flowers are clear, golden yellow, and a bit larger than the wildflower, but very much the same. Each plant, once it matures, puts up a whole bouquet (probably 20) of these big flowers and holds them in bloom for weeks, even in the heat of mid-summer. This is the kind of plant every perennial gardener loves. Today, "Goldsturm" is super-popular worldwide.

Rudbeckia fulgida var speciosa This variety of the species (sometimes referred to as *var newmanii*) is much the same as the one above and is the parent of several other well-known garden perennials including "**Viette's**

Little Suzy." It has similar standard Black-Eyed Susan blooms, but is shorter, growing to only about 18". This one is named after a famous family of hybridizers in the US, descended from Martin Viette, a Swiss gardener

who arrived on Long Island in 1920. He and his family have created a long list of excellent new perennials, and this is one of them.

***Rudbeckia lacinata* 'Golden Glow'**

It grows so tall in the wild (up to 9ft.) it's often assumed to be a sunflower, but it is not. The flowers are very large with drooping petals, colored a pale lemon yellow. The species can be quite impressive in a wildflower meadow, since the big flowers and petals often flutter' in the breeze, standing above other plants. But it's too big for most gardens.

This species is best known as the wild parent of one of your great-grandmother's favorite flowers, Golden Glow. It is a tall plant, up to 5 ft, which was introduced in 1894. The yellow blooms are fully double, and resemble a bright yellow chrysanthemum. Not very popular and not so well known today, they, like the parents, are often assumed to be short sunflowers or tall mums. Golden Glow forms clusters of flowers on the tall stems which are famous for "toppling over" as the flowers open. Millions of gardeners have rigged stakes to keep old Golden Glow plants standing tall with their beautiful blooms. They are some of the toughest, longest-lasting perennials in old gardens. A shorter version is called "Golden Drop," and grows to only 2-3 feet.



Rudbeckia subtomentosa

This Black-eyed Susan is native to the central US from Wisconsin to Texas. It grows to only about 4 ½ ft, and its flowers are distinguished by blunt tips on each petal. A commercial cultivar from this species is "**Henry Eilers**", which grows to 4 feet and has large, tubular petals with blunt tips.

Brown-eyed Susan, a biennial or short lived herbaceous perennial, grows in well-drained moist to wet soils in light shade to full sun within open woodlands, alluvial thickets, roadsides and prairies. The root system includes several short taproots along with smaller roots.



Brown-eyed Susan has a primary stem that grows to 3 to 5 feet tall. Plant width (spread) is about half as wide as the plant is tall. Secondary ascending branches grow from the axils of most primary stem leaves, with lower branches reaching up to two feet in length. Even with the many flowering branches, when not confined by other vegetation, the plant has an overall open to airy appearance. Stems and branches, generally a medium green, may have reddish shading, especially when plants are younger. Stems and branches are densely covered with upright hairs and feel very rough (scabrous). In deer country, primary stems are eaten early in the growing season so that lower secondary branches become dominant and plants may be only a foot or two tall.

Brown-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia triloba* var. *triloba*) of the Aster (Asteraceae) family occurs naturally in the U.S. from Texas to Nebraska and Minnesota, then east and south to the borders, as well as apparently introduced in Colorado and Utah. The leaves of brown-eyed Susan are variable. All leaves are thin but, being covered with short hairs (hirsute), feel thicker and rough. Hairs of the upper leaf surface are equally spread while on lower surfaces, hairs are concentrated on primary leaf veins. Leaf margins and petioles have longer hairs.

Harbingers of Fall

Along road sides and in gardens, certain perennial plants announce the fall season by their presence.



New England Aster blooms in early fall along roadsides everywhere. It is a herbaceous perennial that may grow 3 to 7 feet tall. The leaves are alternate, rough, and hairy. The leaves have a smooth margin. The stem is fuzzy. Large, purple flowers with a yellow center mature from August to October. The herb produces a dry seed (achene) that matures in the late fall.

The plant certainly is found in New England and most areas of the eastern United states. New England aster is also widely naturalized throughout most of Europe, in parts of central Asia, on the island of Hispaniola and in New Zealand.

Showy deep pink-purple flowers are attractive to wildlife including bees and butterflies and also make great cut flowers for arrangements. Tolerates clay soil and makes a great addition to a rain garden. Plants can be cut to the ground after flowering to promote strong new growth. Good air circulation will help prevent foliar diseases.

Host plant for the Pearl Crescent caterpillars which have several broods and appear from April through November in the north and throughout the year in the deep south and Mexico. Aster flower nectars are attractive to bees, hover flies, and migrating Monarch butterflies. Songbirds and small mammals eat the seeds

As the season progresses, New England aster leaves will often turn colors and dry up on the stem. The lower leaves will dry up and fall off first, with the condition progressing up the stem. By the time the plant blooms, there may only be a few leaves left on the stem and those will be concentrated up by the flowers. This is a natural occurrence with New England aster and isn't an indicator of poor health or disease

There seems to have been a universal reliance by Native American tribes on burning the flowers and leaves that is interesting, the smoke being used in Inipi (sweat lodge) Ceremonies, to revive the unconscious, to treat mental illness, nosebleeds, headaches, congestion, for smudging and as an additive to Kinnikinnick smoking mixtures. The dried blossoms were also snuffed for similar purposes, or the vapor inhaled as steam. Aster tea was used to treat earache, relieve gas pains, stomach aches, & fevers. The flowers and roots were both commonly use



Goldenrod

Canadian Goldenrod is one of the most prolific plants in North America (and the world). If you've ever driven along a rural road, abandoned field, or powerline cut in late summer you've probably noticed the golden plumes swaying in the breeze

Canada Goldenrod is a herbaceous perennial wildflower native to most of North America. Scientifically known as *Solidago canadensis*, it grows 4-5 feet in height in full sun and well-draining soil. Blooming yellow flowers for 4 weeks in summer/fall, numerous pollinators feed on nectar, pollen, and caterpillars on its leaves.

Canadian Goldenrod can be aggressive in its home native-range....it has also spread throughout the world. It has become firmly established in China, India and Europe. Some experts warn against planting it in a home garden.

Canadian Goldenrod has been used medicinally by the Native Americans for hundreds to thousands of years. More recently a decoction (tea) has been frequently used in Europe to treat kidney stones¹. Research has also found it to be an effective pain reliever in mice, as well as having antibacterial qualities.

There were 29 medicinal uses of Canada Goldenrod documented for nine Native American Tribes. Some of the uses of the plant include the following:

- A decoction of the plant was used in a bath as a sedative to calm crying babies or with excessive diarrhea
- The flowers when crushed and chewed could relieve a sore throat
- Infusion of flowers used as a pain reliever
- An infusion of flowers or shoots could also be used to treat fever
- The roots could be smoked like tobacco
- Infusion of roots could be used to cause vomiting

Goldenrod is considered a valued plant because butterflies use it as a nectar plant on their migration routes.

There are also a wide variety of gall forming insects that utilize Canadian Goldenrod

The most common misconception about goldenrod is that it is responsible for hay fever. It does not cause hay fever – ragweed which also flowers in the fall - is the culprit.



Sumac



Staghorn sumac is a native deciduous shrub or tree in the Anacardiaceae (cashew) family. It is not poisonous like its distant cousin poison sumac. This plant forms thickets in the wild via self-seeding and root suckering. It is native to woodland edges, roadsides, railroad embankments and stream or swamp margins from Quebec to Ontario to Minnesota south to Georgia, Indiana, and Iowa. It naturally occurs in the western part of North Carolina. It is particularly noted for the reddish-brown hairs that cover the young branchlets in somewhat the same way that velvet covers the horns of a stag (male deer), hence the common name.

Staghorn sumac is often used in mass plantings, for naturalizing, or on steep slopes.. It is one of the last plants to leaf out in the spring with bright green leaves that change to an attractive yellow, orange, and scarlet in fall. It is also one of the first trees to turn color in late summer, so it is easy to spot on roadsides. Among the most recognizable characteristics are large, upright clusters of fuzzy red fruits that appear above the branches in late summer on female plants. They are highly appealing to birds.



This plant is a larval host plant for both the Luna Moth and Spring Azure butterfly. It attracts pollinators and the deep red berries are a welcome fall and winter food source for songbirds making this tree an excellent addition to a wildlife or woodland garden. Because of its suckering roots it is a candidate for erosion control.

Staghorn sumac is known for its striking red fruit clusters, In some Native American cultures, the plant is believed to have healing properties and is used in remedies for various ailments. Additionally, the sumac's branches were used to create dye for textiles and its tart fruits were used by pioneers to make a refreshing beverage similar to lemonade.

Yorkshire Pudding

The Folks in Great Britain, Wales, and Scotland eat some weird stuff. But one traditional dish often found in pubs and “Carveries” is a tasty treat. Yorkshire pudding is a baked pudding made from a batter of eggs, flour, and milk or water. It is not really a pudding as we know it at all. It is more like a puffed pancake or roll. A common English side dish, it is a versatile food that can be served in numerous ways depending on its ingredients, size, and the accompanying components of the meal. As a first course, it can be served with onion gravy. For a main course, it may be served with meat and gravy — traditionally roast beef — as part of the traditional Sunday roast but can also be filled with foods such as bangers and mash to make a meal.



Sausages can be added to make toad in the hole. In some parts of England, (especially the Midlands) the Yorkshire pudding can be eaten as a dessert, with a sweet sauce called raspberry vinegar. The 18th-century cookery writer Hannah Glasse was the first to use the term "Yorkshire pudding" in print.

Yorkshire pudding is made by pouring a batter — made from milk, flour and eggs — into hot beef dripping, lard, or other rendered fat, (from which it gains its flavor), in a preheated baking pan (ramekins or muffin tins in the case of miniature puddings) and baking in a hot oven. They can also be baked in cast-iron frying pans



Hoggles – Demented Cat Logic

To my caregiver: I recently found out I am a descendant of Scottish cats who wore kilts and meowed in a brogue accent no one could understand. My descendants used to ride the Loch Ness monster just for fun. I would like to be served Yorkshire pudding (with lots of gravy) weekly to preserve my Scottish heritage. I refuse to eat anything called "toad in the hole".

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