



Alamosa Landscapes

People and Flower Names

by Marilyn Loser

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Have you ever wondered about the relationship between flower and people names?



Sweet William and Black-eyed Susan

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*) can trace their names to an English poem, "Sweet William's Farewell to Black-eyed Susan" by John Gay written in the early 1700's. Black-eyed Susans are native to North America and it seems that British colonists gave the name to the yellow flower with the dark center when they arrived in the new World. Turns out the two flowers bloom at the same time and some like to think this expresses the lovers' eternal love for each other.

Susans, also called gloriosa daisies bloom along many Colorado roadways in the summer. They are a biennial but are often grown as an annual. I have several patches that come back every summer. Sweet

Williams do well in the San Luis Valley, but mine tend to die out after several years and I replace them with new plants from the nursery. You can view images of these plants and most of those listed below at AlamosaFlowers.net.

Most of us have known someone named Lily or Rose. But did you know Rhoda is of Greek origin and mean rose? Or that Rosalind is of Spanish origin and means pretty rose? It is believed that the poet Edmund Spenser coined the name which was further popularized by Shakespeare's character in "As You Like It." Rosalind was a popular girls' name in the 1940's due to the popularity of the movie star Rosalind Russell. As far as growing roses in Alamosa, I do best with the wilder varieties like the yellow Harrison or the pink woodsia.

I've never met a woman named Petunia, but remember the cartoon character from Loony Tunes who was the girlfriend of Porky Pig. I always have a couple of hanging baskets of these annuals around the yard in summer.

Veronica (*Veronica*) or speedwell is one of my favorite flower types. The genus name refers to Saint Veronica, an Italian saint. Some believe the name is derived from the Latin words vera, which means true, and icon, meaning image. I have several types growing in the garden and they reliably return each year. One creeping variety (*thymoides*) should begin blooming soon. Taller types such as pink Spicata Fox and white Icicle bloom in the summer.

Then there's the lovely ground cover creeping Jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) or moneywort with bright yellow summer blooms. One source suggests the plant was first grown as an herbal remedy in the early 17th century and was called creeping chenny but as words evolved over time the plant became known as creeping Jenny.

Queen Ann's Lace (*Daucus carota*) also known as wild carrot is a white flowering plant native to Europe and southwest Asia, and naturalized to North America. I can't remember seeing any in the mountains around the Valley, but frequently encountered it along streams in the mountains outside of Colorado Springs when I lived there many years ago. It has small, open-work white heads that surround a tiny red flower. Legend says the flower represents a blood droplet when Queen Anne (Queen of England, Scotland and Ireland from 1702 – 1707) pricked herself with a needle when she was making lace.

Marguerite is of French origin meaning pearl or daisy. The only one I grow is silver leaf Marguerite (*Anthemis bierberseiniiana*). It does very well in the rock garden with little care. Most of the season it is a low silver mat. In June it develops lovely yellow daisy-like flowers. Marguerite was in the top 100 girls' names from 1890 to 1921.

Erica is a Scandinavian name. In Latin, it means heather. It is a genus with over 800 different plants in the family *Ericaceae*. While I know some Ericas, I don't know of any of the plants growing around the Valley. Let me know if you know of any!

"You can bury a lot of troubles digging in the dirt." Unknown