



Alamosa Landscapes

If I Were to Plant a Drought-tolerant Garden - Part 2

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Last time I discussed the ongoing drought in Alamosa; it continues even with Monday afternoon's wonderful rain! I'm focusing on the concept of planting a new drought tolerant garden based on plants in our yard that I love, but that receive less water than many lush plants.

Two weeks ago I talked about Rocky Mountain penstemon (*Penstemon strictus*), yarrow – pink & red (*Achillea 'Paprika'*), yarrow--yellow (such as *A. filipendulina*), Sedum (*Sedum* species), blanket flower (*Gaillardia x Grandiflora* species), and golden rod – short (*Solidago*):

The list continues with:

Baby's breath (creeping - *Gypsophila repens* & regular *Gypsophila paniculata*): Creeping baby's breath blooms early in the season and has small white or pink flowers on plants that are about 4 inches high. Mine have come back for many years and don't spread too much. I do dead head them after bloom and they remain a light green for the remainder of the season. They need very little care. The taller baby's breath grows 1 – 2 ½ feet tall. It has tiny white or pink blossoms and reseeds infrequently. It doesn't do well in dried arrangements as the flowers are too small when dried. One warning: some people may find the odor offensive. It smells more like another part of a baby's anatomy!

Corn flower -- perennial knapweed (*Centaurea hypoleuca*): I love the magenta color of the blooms. While they do look a bit like a thistle bloom the foliage has no barbs. They bloom in early to mid-June and continue somewhat if deadheaded. They stand 1 – 2 ft. tall and do best in the sun, but are ok in partial shade. They do reseed freely. However, plants are easy to pull if they grow somewhere where you don't want them.

Hens and chicks – cold hardy ones (*Sempervivum*): I just discovered I don't have this in my database! My favorite ones measure about 4 inches across and form a dense mat about 1-2 inches high. Many others are only about 1 - 2 inches wide. Since they form a dense mat weeds don't have much of a chance to spring up in between plants. Some bloom occasionally. I would call

the blooms interesting rather than beautiful. They stand 6 – 12 inches high and have a whitish/yellow blossom on the top.

Wormwood – hardy ones (*Artemisa*). This blue/green plant grows about 12 inches high. I found some many years ago in a dry meadow near Gunnison. It is very easy to grow and I have it in our fairly dry rock garden alongside hens and chicks.

Somewhat drought tolerant flowers that do well in our garden due to deep taproots include columbine (*Aquilegia* species) and mallow - poppy (*Callirhoe involucrate*). Even with all the high wind and alternating cold and heat, our columbines did very well this summer. I've deadheaded most of them now and some will re-bloom again before fall. Most of ours grow 1 – 2 ½ feet tall. They bend gracefully in the wind; I didn't find any that had snapped off. I've grown a variety of colors over the years and now the plants seem to make up their own color combinations including blue/white (our state flower), yellow/red, pink/white, white, yellow, and purple/white. I love them all! I've had some folks say if you get yellow ones you should pull them as the whole bed will eventually produce only yellow blooms. I haven't had this happen.

I've grown magenta colored poppy mallow in our rock garden and other drier areas for many years now. Occasionally, they've died off and I've had to replace them, but it is worth it to me. What a charmer! It grows about 5 inches high, starts blooming in late June and often blooms through August. I do place mulch over them in the winter to help prevent die off since we don't water from the time cold weather hits in the fall until it seems pipes won't freeze in the spring.

I don't have enough room in column to cover drought tolerant shrubs so will include them along with another topic next time.

Please remember that even when a plant is considered drought tolerant you need to water it with some regularly in the San Luis Valley (SLV) – especially in drought years. You can find out more about all of these plants and see photos from our Alamosa garden at AlamosaFlowers.net.

Stay safe and take care of yourself and others.

“The artist is the confidant of nature, flowers carry on dialogues with him through the graceful bending of their stems and the harmoniously tinted nuances of their blossoms. Every flower has a cordial word which nature directs towards him.” Auguste Rodin