



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Rudbeckia hirta¹

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Introduction

Black-Eyed Susan forms a clumping, 2-foot-tall mound of foliage topped with a bright display of red/orange flowers bordered with yellow (Fig. 1). Distribution of color in the flower varies depending on the cultivar and seed source. Flowering is more profuse when the faded blossoms are regularly removed. The flowers are useful for cutting. Space plants 18 to 24 inches apart in a mass planting to create a carpet of color. Plants can become weeds in the garden because seeds germinate readily in nearby beds. What a wonderful weed to have in the garden.

General Information

Scientific name: *Rudbeckia hirta*

Pronunciation: rudd-BECK-kee-uh HER-tuh

Common name(s): Black-Eyed Susan, Gloriosa Daisy, Coneflower

Family: *Compositae*

Plant type: annual; perennial; biennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 2 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun

Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Mar; Apr; Oct; Nov

Origin: native to North America

Uses: mass planting; border; cut flowers

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

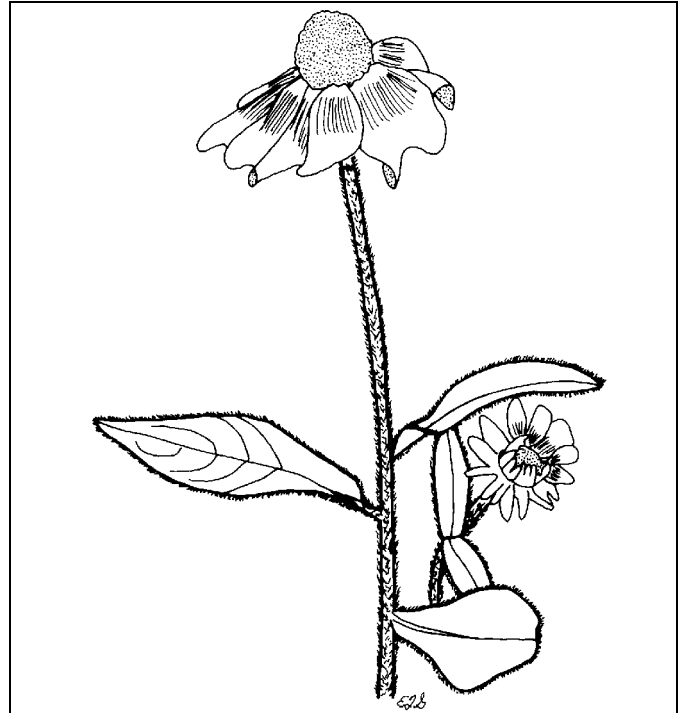


Figure 1. Black-Eyed Susan.

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: spreading; round

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** entire
- Leaf shape:** ovate
- Leaf venation:** none, or difficult to see
- Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** not applicable
- Fall characteristic:** not applicable

Flower

- Flower color:** orange-red; yellow
- Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** no fruit
- Fruit length:** no fruit
- Fruit cover:** no fruit
- Fruit color:** not applicable
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** medium

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in full sun
- Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam
- Drought tolerance:** high
- Soil salt tolerances:** good
- Plant spacing:** 12 to 18 inches

Other

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** not applicable
- Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential:** may self-seed each year
- Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

The many *Rudbeckia* species tolerate most well-drained soils if given full sun. Provide excellent drainage for best growth. High salt tolerance makes *Rudbeckia* well-suited for planting close to the beach.

Various flower color combinations of red, orange and yellow are available in the five or more available cultivars. *Rudbeckia hirta* 'Indian Summer' is a sturdy selection with large, yellow flowers that develop 10 to 14 weeks after seeds are sown. Unlike many other Black-Eyed Susans, this one does not require staking. It is also relatively free of disease and insect problems.

Rudbeckia seed may be planted directly into the garden. The seed germinates in 5 to 10 days at temperatures between 70 to 75-degrees F. Seed started indoors germinates more quickly. Barely cover the seed. The plants wilt for one or two days after transplanting. Propagate perennial types by division. *Rudbeckia* is generally propagated in the garden by division or cuttings in the spring or fall season.

Aphids suck sap from the plants and coat the leaves with sticky honeydew.

Goldenglow sawfly may completely defoliate plants. The larvae are gray with dark stripes.

Four-lined plant bug causes round, brown, sunken spots on the leaves. The injury is often mistaken for a disease.

Pests and Diseases

Downy mildew causes seedlings to wilt and die. On older plants the foliage is mottled light yellow.

Several leaf spots may be found but are not serious. Remove and destroy infected leaves.

Powdery mildew may cause a white powdery growth on the leaves in late summer.

White smut causes light spots on the leaves. Destroy plant residues in the fall and get rid of infected plants as they are noticed.

Verticillium wilt may kill *Rudbeckia* spp.