

A Greener View: Myriad of ways to have a blooming wedding

by Jeff_Rugg

Q: If I want to have daisies in full bloom for an August wedding, when should I start them by seed?

A: I assume you mean Shasta Daisies, but the word daisy can mean other kinds of plants too. The Shasta has a botanical name of *Leucanthemum* usually followed with an X which means it is a hybrid and then that is followed by a variety name in parenthesis. They are usually a perennial that is growing in a garden or is purchased as a plant and they all tend to bloom in June and July. By deadheading the flowers in June and July, you will get some reblooming the rest of the season, but not as spectacular as the full bloom in June and July.

If you are going to start them from seeds, I would do so a few weeks later than usual for your area, so they have a late start and might bloom later. You can hedge your bets by starting some seeds on a weekly basis for a month or two, so that the seeds mature into blooms at intervals. This is actually commonly done with some plants like gladiolus that come up and bloom once and then are done.

You could also place an order with a greenhouse and put the burden on them to get the timing right, since they can control the environment better. There are daisies in bouquets and as potted plants, so you could get them grown to order either way. If you want them for your garden, you would just plant the pots in the garden a day or two before the wedding. Then some could be used as centerpieces and possibly given away at the reception.

Other perennial plants could substitute for daisies such as the white varieties of purple coneflower.

Another possibility if you do not specifically need a particular kind of flower, but are just seeking a color, is to plant annuals. Unlike most perennials that only bloom for a few weeks and then go to seed, annuals flower virtually all summer long. Some varieties need dead heading to keep the plant full of blooms, but many newer varieties are self deadheading and keep blooming fully for a long time.

Q: I have two Northern-grown China Boy Hollies, one is a female and one is a male. They have looked beautiful all winter long and the female was just full of red berries. Just this past week I have noticed that the leaves are turning all brown and they both look just horrible. I was thinking back to when we had a major snow storm about a month back, that they were both covered over completely with snow and stayed that way until the snow melted, which was quite some time. Could this have anything to do with it? I was wondering if you could give me some advice on what to do, because I would hate to lose them ... they are very beautiful bushes, and they were about \$40 apiece.

A: Being a broad-leaved evergreen means that hollies need to be able to get water to their leaves at any time, even during the winter. Without water, the leaves dry out just like our skin gets chapped in a dry winter wind. Snow does not harm the plant and even helps it if it covers the leaves so the dry wind is blocked. The problem is caused by frozen ground that does not give up water to the roots, so the plant can't get water to the leaves. Even though the problem occurred weeks ago, the damage is slow to appear. If only leaves are affected, the plant should recover in the spring, but if stems are affected, whole branches will die.

If the plant can get enough water into the trunk and leaves before the ground freezes, hollies usually don't experience much drying out. They are more cold weather tolerant than many other plants, but sometimes just the right weather conditions occur that the plant can't handle. If the plants are in a bad location, the problem could occur every winter, even when the conditions are not exceptionally bad.

If your plants are in an especially windy location, say between two buildings where the wind-tunnel effect

occurs, then they should be moved. Also, if they are near a sunny south or west wall where the leaves warm up to spring-like conditions in the reflected heat off the wall, but the roots stay frozen, then they will have a problem. Another problem could be salt mist from road salt if they are near a street or highway.

Small rodents and even rabbits and squirrels can gnaw on the trunks of shrubs and small trees. The side that is damaged may have the only brown leaves. If they chew all the way around the trunk, the whole top will die, but the roots may send up new stems to eventually replace the top again.

There is nothing you can do for these damaged leaves, they will begin falling off in the spring, although some that are not too badly damaged may stay on for another year. New growth will come out in the spring and hopefully hide the remaining brown ones. If they remain in their current location, next winter you might want to install a wind blanket around the plants to protect them. If there is a dry spell in the winter, you could get the garden hose out to water them before the weather turns too cold.

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