

Happy go lucky

THE WORLD SMILES IN DAISIES!

Simple, sun-loving daisies are among the most prolific summer flowers. These easy-going, easy to grow plants provide generous lashings of colour though summer and autumn. Bees and other pollinators love them too.

Many of our top performing daisy plants hail from places of low rainfall and are well adapted to extremes of wind, heat, drought and impoverished soils. They are not plants for deep shade or wet boggy soil; ample sunshine and well-drained soil are key.

There are lots of daisies for hot climates and others that survive harsh winters and frosts. There is a variety in almost every colour, offering lots of options for pots, rock gardens, borders or mass planted groundcover. Daisies are at home in pretty cottage gardens and windy beach gardens. They combine well with natives and succulents. Which daisy is best for you and your garden?

Beloved marguerites

Loved by cottage gardeners and arguably the most popular garden daisies of all, today's colourful marguerite daisies are descendents of *Argyranthemum frutescens*, the original white marguerite, a small shrub native to the Canary Islands. With finely divided fern-like foliage and ever more compact growth habits, these now highly bred plants come in a huge range of colours and flower forms, including doubles. Modern favourites include the Federation daisies, the larger flowered SuperFeds and the recently released Lollies series, all of which



Trim daisy plants after their main flowering flush to encourage tidily compact growth and further flowering.

make excellent container plants. Older varieties are often seen in gardens. Their names long forgotten, they may grow up to a metre tall, but are generally very hardy and enduring, and are favourites for sharing among friends via cuttings. 'Marguerite' is the French word for daisy, in particular the pretty road side weed *Leucanthemum vulgare*, which we call ox-eye daisy.

For colder climates

Known variously as golden marguerite, yellow chamomile and dyers chamomile, *Anthemis tinctoria* is a hardy perennial that grows wild where winters are colder, including meadowlands of Europe and North America. Garden varieties, such as EC Buxton and Sauce Hollandaise, are popular in English gardens and perform well as perennials in our South Island. With ferny aromatic foliage bearing loads of blooms in tones of white, cream and buttery yellow, they look great with grasses.

The Americans

The original Shasta daisy, *Leucanthemum x superbum*, is a hybrid plant created in the late 1800's by American plantsman, Luther Bank who named it for the snowy peaks of California's Mount Shasta. With strong long stems and large showy blooms the shasta daisy is perfect for picking. The original white shasta daisy with its yellow button centre has been joined by some beautiful double and soft yellow varieties, including the Real series featuring in garden centres this summer.



Echinacea (aka coneflower) has come a long way since Native Americans discovered the medicinal qualities of this lovely purple wildflower. Still today *Echinacea purpurea* is widely used in natural healing, while modern plant breeding has come up with an expanding choice of colours. New and recent releases include the Sunmagic Vintage Moodz series in garden centres this summer. Echinaceas bloom from summer through autumn.

From the grasslands of America and Mexico comes the *Gaillardia* daisy, aka blanket flower or firewheel. Grown mainly as annuals their stunning orange and red colours make an eye-catching accent in borders, rockeries and pots over summer and autumn.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Pink and yellow marguerites
 LEFT: *Anthemis* daisy with native grasses at Dunedin's Larnach Castle
 CENTRE TOP: *Argyranthemum* Butterball
 CENTRE BOTTOM: *Echinacea purpurea*
 ABOVE: *Gaillardia* Arizona Sun

African daisies

South Africa is home to many of the world's most beautiful plants, including many different daisies. At least three different species are known widely among gardeners as 'African daisies'.

The ***Osteospermum*** varieties, also known as Cape daisies, African daisies or sailor boy daisies, are perennial plants with bushy mounding growth habits. Resilient older forms are commonly larger growing plants, often white or shades of pink or purple. Modern breeding has led to an explosion of extra colours on compact plants.

These fabulous seaside plants bloom from spring till the first frost. In colder climates they are grown mainly as annuals or can be protected from frost by overwintering indoors in pots.

Also called African daisies, ***Arctotis*** are low-maintenance groundcover plants which are useful for draping over banks and retaining walls in dry or coastal gardens. Their flowers offer warm tones of cream, yellow, orange, red or pink with contrasting central discs on a textured blanket of greyish green leaves. Very similar but smaller growing, ***Gazania***s are loved for their long season display of bright jazzy blooms on a carpet of slender leaves. *Gazanias* are sensational as easy-care groundcover or container plants. Many African daisy varieties will close their flowers at night or during cloudy weather, keeping their pollen dry.



African daisies and others that hail from warm coastal climates, (such as Marguerite daisies) are frost tender, but they can be protected over a cold winter in pots. For best flowering, feed potted plants regularly with balanced liquid plant food or controlled-release fertiliser.

Blue African daisy, ***Felicia amelloides*** has perfect sky blue flowers with sunny yellow centres. This long time favourite grows superbly in warm coastal climates. Around 30-40 cm tall and wide, it's a good choice for rockeries or pots and a contender for mixed hanging baskets. *Felicia* will survive a light frost if the soil is free draining.

TRY ME
AT THE
SEASIDE



ABOVE: ***Osteospermum Voltage Yellow***

TOP: ***Arctotis***

RIGHT: ***Felicia amelloides***

Tip

Daisies combine well with flaxes, grasses and grass-like plants.

Home grown

New Zealand daisies include the tough and beautiful Marlborough rock daisy (*Pachystegia insignis*), a great coastal plant with striking leathery leaves. The NZ mountain daisies (many different *Celmisia* species) are mainly alpine plants that thrive in colder climates. With some interesting foliage types as well as their striking flowers, they deserve to be seen in gardens more often.



Australian gem

Of all the daisy flowers that are native to Australia, the leading favourites for gardens are the **Brachyscome** daisies (aka Swan River daisy). These low mounding plants with fine ferny foliage are smothered in dainty daisies for much of the year and look great spilling over walls or pathways or pots. In recent times, new improved varieties have arrived in pink and white as well as the original purple.


GREAT
FOR
POTS

*She loves me,
she loves
me not...*



Plants with daisy flowers belong to the vast plant family Asteraceae, which used to be called Compositae, because a daisy flower is actually a “composite” of many individual flowers joined together. Botanically each petal is a complete flower. More than 20,000 different plant species belong to the daisy family, from tiny plants to tall trees.



TOP: **Celmisia semicordata**
LEFT: **Brachyscome Brasco Purple**
ABOVE: **Gazanias in a patio pot**