

## PLEASE PLANT THE DAISIES

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By Ralph E. Mitchell

While daisies may seem like something better suited for the north, there are a couple of plants called daisies that will do well in our climate. Common names aside, both the Gerbera Daisy and the African Bush Daisy look daisy-like and offer perennial spender in the garden.

The Gerbera daisy is also called the Transvaal daisy as this plant originated in Transvaal, South Africa. These perennials have been cultivated to the degree that there are many hybrids in brilliant colors and forms. Not only useful as bedding plant, gerberas are a popular cut flower often seen in floral arrangements. Gerberas begin to bloom when they twelve inches tall and eventually form a dense clump capable of producing numerous flower stalks. The flowers produced by these can be huge - up to seven inches wide in yellow, orange, pink, brilliant



*African Bush Daisy (Gamolepis chrysanthemoides)*  
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scarlet, and deep red. The variety of flower forms is also impressive. Locally, you are most likely to find the basic single form. This flower type consists of a central green disk surrounded by a single row of petals. A double form, of course, has a double row of petals which overlap with a green, black, or dark red eye. Building on the double form there is a crested double; full crested double, and quilled full crested double with an even more elaborate design.

Gerberas love full sun and well-drained soil with some organic matter added. If you are starting with small seedlings, make sure to loosen and untangle the roots without breaking the soil ball to help with quick recovery and establishment. After about two years of growth, gerberas will need to be dug and divided. This is necessary because the crown of the plant where all of the leaves emerge tends to sink into the soil over time. When this happens, the crown can eventually rot. If you want, gerberas can also be started from seed available through most popular seed catalogs.

African Bush Daisies are another perennial plant that will produce yellow, daisy-like flowers. The African Bush Daisy can actually develop into a small shrub up to four feet tall with a similar spread. The leaves are fern-like and make a nice backdrop for the yellow flowers. This plant is drought tolerant, but not salt tolerant, and likes a full sun site for best flowering. Generally pest-free, one of the biggest problems faced by Bush Daisies is nematodes. Occasional pruning will help

keep it in bounds and develop bushier growth. Plant Bush Daisies about two-feet apart to eventually form a mass planting. These perennials will reseed themselves and the resulting seedlings will be readily available for planting elsewhere. A

substitute for this plant, *Euryops pectinatus*, is also called a Bush Daisy, but has more compact growth and more flowers. You may be seeing more of this plant in garden centers because of its superior attributes.

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Daisy-like plants, whether Gerberas or Bush Daisies, will make a great and cheery addition to your landscape beds and borders. For more information on all types of perennial plants, please contact our Master Gardeners on the Plant Lifeline at 941.764.4340 from 1:00pm-4:00pm Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Our office is located at 25550 Harbor View Road, Suite 3, in Port Charlotte. Our **Plant Clinics** are available across the county:

- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** every Thursday 10:00am-1:00pm.
- **Demonstration Garden** (6900 Florida Street, PG) every Thursday 9:00am-11:00am.
- **Mid-County Regional Library** 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of month 1:00pm-3:00pm.
- **Edison College Learning Resources Library** 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of month 1:00pm-4:00pm.

Monthly **Plant Clinics** are Saturdays 9:00am-12:00pm at the following locations:

- **Englewood/Charlotte Public Library** 1<sup>st</sup> Saturday of month.
- **Peachland Promenades Publix** - 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of month.
- **Home Depot Murdock & Home Depot Punta Gorda** - 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of month.

Ralph Mitchell is the County Extension Director/Horticulture Agent for the Charlotte County Cooperative Extension Service. You may contact him by email ([Ralph.Mitchell@charlottefl.com](mailto:Ralph.Mitchell@charlottefl.com)). You may also contact a volunteer Master Gardener 1:00pm-4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 941.764.4340 or by email ([Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com](mailto:Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com)).

For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Steele, at 941.764.4340. Allison can help educate you about the Florida Yards & Neighborhoods Program so that you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

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*Resource:*

*Tjia, B. & Black, R.J. (2003) Gerberas for Florida. The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.*

*Gilman, E. F. & Landrum, L. (2007) Gamolepis chrysanthemoides - African Bush Daisy. The University of Florida Extension Service, IFAS.*