



Orange, peach and black dahlias in a vase with common hops.

Fresh from the Garden

FOLLOW THIS ADVICE FOR
A THRIVING AND SUCCESSFUL
PLOT FULL OF BLOOMS PERFECT
FOR CUTTING

BY KATY SPRATTE JOYCE

IT'S A PRETTY PASTIME that saw a significant boost in popularity in the early days of the pandemic—and growing cut-flower gardens is poised to stay. To become a cutting-garden pro, follow the advice from a Midwest-based master. Jamie Rohda is the owner of Harvest Home Flowers in Waverly, Nebraska, a farm growing specialty cut-flowers for nearly 25 years.

According to Jamie, “A cut-flower garden is a garden not meant for looks but for harvesting. Whereas a flower garden meant for the landscape is laid out for the benefit of being viewed, a cut-flower garden’s purpose is to provide the owner with a continuing array of flowers to be harvested and used for floral display.” That’s not to say a cut-flower garden can’t be aesthetically appealing; it’s just not the primary



Iceland poppy



Zinnia



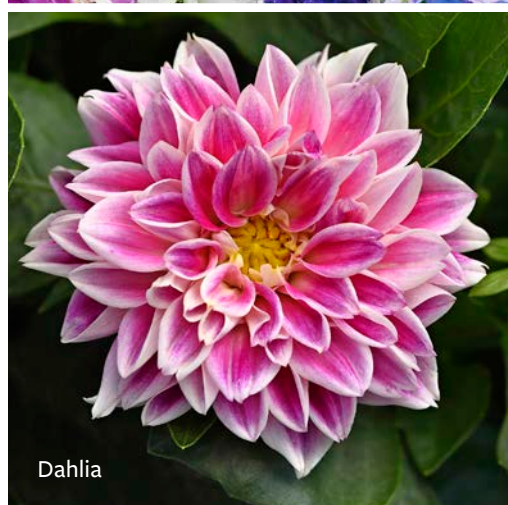
David Austin rose



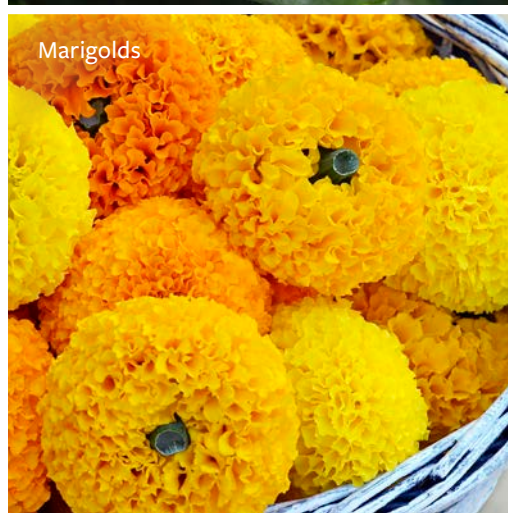
Cosmos



Delphiniums



Dahlia



Marigolds

intent of this type of space. To keep this goal in mind, Jamie finds that it's best, if possible, to situate a cut-flower garden where it is the least visible, so that the temptation to leave it for viewing is not as great.

Picking the Plants

Before choosing flowers, Jamie suggests that you ask yourself a series of questions to set yourself up for success:

- What amount of sun does the garden get? Will it be best to plant sun-loving flowers, or will this be a partially shaded garden?
- What are your personal likes and dislikes?
- What skills do you have? Is this your first time planting a garden, or do you already have some growing experience?
- How much growing space do you have?
- What climate zone are you in?

Jamie prefers to choose what she calls "cut and come again" blooms, which are "annual types of flowers or flowers that can be planted multiple times throughout the season for the beginning grower, as they give you the most reward for your effort." Some of her go-to favorites include zinnias, ageratum, tall verbena, sunflowers, celosia, cosmos, gomphrena, dianthus and cut-flower types of marigolds. Jamie says, "With the addition of some perennials that may already be in the

grower's landscape, these can provide an ongoing array of cut flowers for the entire season."

Designing the Garden

In terms of what grows well together, the most important thing to consider is size. Jamie says, "I think as long as the size is considered, almost anything works. Of course, you don't want to grow 5-foot-tall sunflowers in with 18-inch ageratum."

When designing a cut-flower bed, sunlight and water availability are the two most important things to consider. Jamie says that most easy-to-cut flowers thrive in full or nearly full sunlight, so plan accordingly. Also, if you live in an area where you need to irrigate, that should be a major consideration during the planning process. She adds one more design note in terms of functionality: "Harvesting is easiest when the garden is laid out in a nice straight bed about 3 feet across." So aim for that when creating a layout.

Maintenance Tips

Once you have everything planted, maintenance is crucial, so your hard work doesn't go to waste. For lifestyle blogger, content creator and avid gardener Kate Knowles of Kate Knowles Home, who started multiple cut-flower gardens from seed in 2021, that means visiting the garden beds almost every morning to check on things.

BEST BLOOMS FOR CUTTING GARDENS

Breadseed poppies

Cosmos

Dahlias

David Austin

English roses

Delphiniums

Iceland poppies

Marigolds

Shirley poppies

Sunflowers

Sweet peas

Zinnias

"Watering is my least favorite chore, so installing a drip irrigation system in our garden beds that waters everything on an automatic timer has made that chore so much easier," Kate says. "I found a video on YouTube from Garden Answer that shows the exact parts you need and instructions on installing it yourself. It wasn't too hard to figure out, and our garden benefits from consistent watering." Kate enjoys maintaining her three cut-flower beds (one dedicated to David Austin roses) with her three sons as a fun family activity.

How to Harvest

Finally, proper harvesting is essential when working on any cut-flower garden. Jamie suggests planning your flower harvest based on temperature: "In the cool of the morning or evening is the first place to start." Be sure to have the proper tools. "A very sharp knife is the best way to harvest cut flowers, but

if you're uncomfortable with that, then a good pair of sharp snips will work," she says. "Those with a bypass-type blade (not an anvil type) will give you a good clean cut that allows the flower to drink when put in water." Cut at an angle while harvesting or arranging, Jamie says, as this will expose the most surface area so the stem can draw up water.

Kate adds that she likes to keep the seed packets for each flower in her cut garden available, as many contain harvesting instructions for optimal vase life. "Each flower has its own harvesting instructions, and usually it's best to do it in the mornings when it's not as hot outside," she says.

And the best part of a cutting-flower garden? The fresh blooms, of course. The options for using fresh flowers are limitless, but Jamie shares a few favorites: "I personally love just a few stems on my kitchen windowsill to enjoy or a collection of vases with one variety in each vase. Of course, a big mixed bouquet is always great for the dining room table! And having fresh flowers to give to a friend is always delightful for both the giver and the receiver." ●

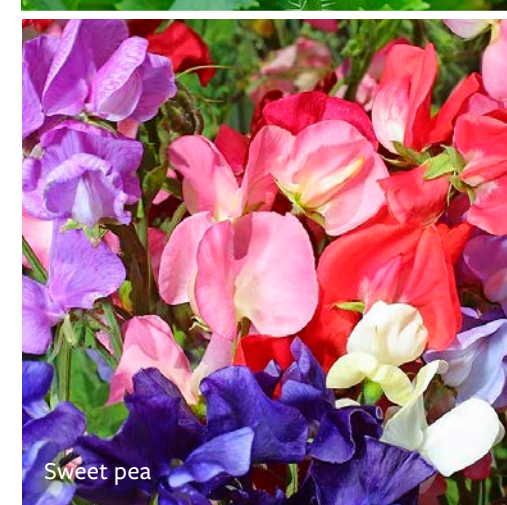
Katy Spratte Joyce is a Midwest-based lifestyle journalist. She grows edible flowers and herbs, and her favorite cut flower is the daffodil.



Sunflower



Breadseed poppy



Sweet pea



Shirley poppy

PREVIOUS SPREAD, LEFT: GAP PHOTOS/JULIETTE WADE; BELOW, FROM LEFT: BALL HORTICULTURAL COMPANY (2); HOWARD RICE/DAVID AUSTIN ROSES; THIS SPREAD, LEFT PAGE: BALL HORTICULTURAL COMPANY (4);

RIGHT PAGE, FROM TOP: STEPHANIE POGACHAR; PAV LAZI/DREAMSTIME.COM; BALL HORTICULTURAL COMPANY; CHRISTIE KEEFER