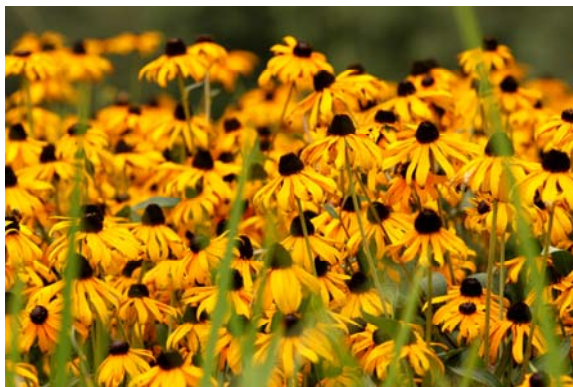


Black-eyed Susan - *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'

A favorite summertime flower, the Black-eyed Susan, with its bright, golden-yellow flowers, produces a 'gold storm' of blooms in gardens everywhere. Selected by the Perennial Plant Association as the 1999 Perennial of the Year, this rudbeckia has been acclaimed internationally as one of the most popular perennials for the past fifty years. produces masses of golden color all summer long. It can be one of the most important flowers in the perennial garden.



A member of the huge aster or composite family, they typically stay in a basal rosette their first year. Then during the second year produce upright, branching stems with orange-gold flowers. The rough-textured leaves are diamond shaped, and the plant produces erect, bristly stems about thirty-six inches tall. It's significant compact habit produces long-blooming flowers, and is low maintenance.

This spectacular perennial tolerates poor clay soils and mild droughts, but grows best in well-drained and moist soil with regular watering. However, it will not tolerate soggy soils. It is a rhizomatous perennial (spreads by rhizomes, making large clumps) with crowded, branching stems. 'Goldsturm' performs as well in the high heat and humidity of Houston, as well as tolerate the arid, cold winters of Amarillo.

This Black-eyed Susan is at home in the naturalized, semi-wild garden, used as a border, or even a non-invasive ground cover with full sun to light shade. Plants have minimal blooms the first season unless they undergo cold treatment (vernalization). The long, strong stems make this orange coneflower ideal for cutting. And, cutting encourages reblooming. 'Goldsturm' can work well in commercial landscapes because of its durability and dramatic visual impact. Its semi-evergreen basal leaves shades out weeds, so plant in drifts eighteen inches apart from bare-root or container-grown anytime during the growing season. Be sure to mulch when establishing a new planting. In the winter, the black stems and seedheads add contrast and texture.

Combine with ornamental grasses or purple coneflower for a visual feast of butterflies and blooms. This plant has few pest or disease problems.

Propagation is by seed, division, or stem cuttings. Height and color uniformity can sometimes vary in plants grown from seed, compared to asexually propagated plants. Germination guidelines recommend moist chilling for 3-4 weeks at 32-35°F, followed by 72°F germination temperature. Divide clumps in early spring or fall. Take stem cuttings as the stem tissue begins to harden.

Interesting tidbits:

- There are about 25 species of Rudbeckia, all native to North America.
- The genus was named for the Swedish physician/botanist Olaus Rudbeck (1660-1740), who preceded Carlus Linnaeus, the inventor of the binomial system of biological nomenclature.
- In 1937, Heinrich Hagermann observed a stunning stand of Rudbeckia at a nursery in the Czech Republic. He convinced his employer, Karl Foerster of Germany to propagate this plant. In 1949 the success of Rudbeckia fulgida var. sullivantii renamed 'Goldsturm' began. 'Goldsturm' translates to English as "gold storm".