

Transition and Deadheading

by Rachel Johansen, owner of Rachel's Gardens

In planning a landscape or garden design, consider blooms for all seasons. When looking at a plant tag or in a book for plant descriptions, often you will find it noted simply as spring, summer or fall for bloom time. However, before purchasing, check deeper into more accurate bloom times.

For example, spring bloomers such as the woodland perennial mertensia bloom Apr–May (early spring) while spring cottage bloomers like peonies and iris bloom May–Jun (late spring). Since most perennials only bloom eight to ten weeks it's best to check exactly when in spring, summer or fall they'll bloom. Another example of overlapping bloom times is planting a garden with May–Jun (late spring) iris, then shasta daisies for Jun–Jul (early summer).

One feature that effects bloom time that a designer can not factor in is the weather in any zone. When rainfall, sunshine or BTU's* are not in the normal range for your area, the bloom time can vary as much as two weeks. So as a designer, landscaper or enthusiastic home gardener, one must work with nature in harmony. With thought and consideration, a garden or landscape can be in color from April thru Oct with overlapping bloom times.

Have you been keeping up with your deadheading? The effort is worth the reward!

By deadheading (cutting off) the terminal (top) flower head to the second leaf or lateral (side) bud, the bloom time will be extended. Thus more time to enjoy the plants beauty. Deadheading a plant just forces the plant to flower again for it has strong urge to set seed for propagation if the terminal flower is not removed. If overwhelmed by the process, choose one or two plants a day.

So pick up your scissors and cut a bouquet for kitchen table. Enjoy your blooms indoors as well as out!

*British Thermal Unit: the quantity of heat required to raise the temperature of one pound of water one degree Fahrenheit at a specified temperature.