Newsarticle

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**Year of the Gerbera**

The National Garden Bureau has selected 2013 as the Year of the Gerbera. Few flowers capture the hearts of people more than Gerbera Daisies since the daisy shape is such a familiar form. Combine the pleasing shape of Gerbera with bright luminous colors and you have an irresistible plant for today’s gardens.

Gerbera species bear a large flower head with rayed petals in pink, orange, yellow, gold, white, red, cream and bi-colors. The center of the flower is either green or black. The flower head has the appearance of a single flower but is actually composed of hundreds of individual flowers. Gerbera flowers are diverse and their flower heads range from 2.5 to 8 inches in diameter.

The main class of flowers is the single type with two layers of flower petals. The semi-doubles are often seen in cut flower types and some series of pot types. Semi-double flowers have extra rows of mini petals around the center eye, giving the blooms added bulk and interest. Double flowers have unique full flowers with 5-7 layers of flower petals that completely cover the flower head. The most unique form is the Spider flower form with thinner and more pointed flower petals resembling sea urchins.

Many consumers have their first encounter with Gerbera as cut flowers since Gerbera is the fifth most used cut flower in the world. Gerberas as cut flowers offer a rich color palette and beautiful flower forms from single to semi-double.

It is not surprising that consumers would want to enjoy Gerberas in mixed containers throughout the summer growing season. Gerberas do well outdoors if given the proper care and conditions.

Plant the crown slightly raised in well-drained media that is slightly acidic pH 5.5 – 6.5. A high pH results in iron chlorosis characterized by yellow striping of the upper foliage. A pH below 5.5 causes excess manganese to accumulate in the lower foliage characterized by black spotting or patches.

Gerberas require morning sun in warmer southern climates and full sun in cooler northern locations. Do not plant them against a brick wall or near surfaces that reflect intense heat.

Water early in the morning to allow rapid drying of foliage. Allowing moisture to remain on the leaf surface overnight invites diseases like powdery mildew.

Incorporate a slow release fertilizer into the media and supplement with a liquid fertilizer every 2 weeks.

Gerberas flower based on the amount of light the plant receives into its center. Remove excess foliage from the center throughout the season to maximize light penetration and flower production.

Cultural preventatives for healthy and floriferous plants include removal of the infected leaves, deadhead frequently,  do not crowd the plants,  provide good air circulation,  keep plants stress free and well watered, and grow resistant plants when available.

For more information on gerbera daisy or any plant call the Wilson Extension Master Gardeners Monday, Wednesday, or Friday from 1-3 PM, 252-237-0113 or email anytime at wilsonemgv@hotmail.com.

Information in this article was provided from the National Garden Bureau.