

Floral Arranging...On The Wild Side

Tim Latimer, Spring 2010

How to make your wild flowers last longer

- Harvest flowers at 1/3 to 1/2 open stage; fully open flowers will not last as long and you will not be able to enjoy watching them open
- The best time to harvest flowers is early in the morning
- Flowers are the most hydrated at this time

Harvesting flowers

- Take a bucket with you when harvesting flowers
- Place stems in fresh water as soon as they are cut
- After you have harvested your flowers its time to condition them

Conditioning flowers

- Remove the lower foliage that would be below the water level
- Re-cut the flower stems
- Place in a floral preservative solution
- Allow to stand in the preservative solution for 2-3 hours before arranging
- This “Conditioning” period will hydrate the flowers and extend flower life up to 200%

Floral preservatives

- Floral preservatives contain:
 - Acid....lower the pH to 3.5
 - Flowers take up water much faster at a low pH
 - Sugar
 - sugar is the natural product of photosynthesis...so it is in effect flower “food”
 - Biocide
 - Prevents bacterial growth which will clog stem tissues and prevent water uptake

Mixing preservative solution

- Commercially available flower preservatives come in small packets with flower purchases
- Read the directions
- A 5 gram packet will only make up 2 cups of preservative
- Incorrectly measured preservatives will do more harm than good

Make your own preservative

- 2 cups lemon lime soda, 2 cups water, 1 tsp bleach
- 4 cups water, 2 Tbsp sugar, 2 Tbsp lemon juice, 1 tsp bleach
- 4 cups water 2 tbsp sugar, 2 Tbsp vinegar, 1 tsp bleach

Cutting stems

- When re-cutting stems for conditioning use a sharp knife or sharp shears.
- It is not necessary to cut stems at an angle but it will make a point for easy insertion into floral foam
- Contrary to old information never crush stems...even woody stems

Wildflowers (weeds?)

- There are many wildflowers in MI that are useful in floral design
- Some may be considered weeds but are quite beautiful
- And the price is right!
- Not all are native to MI....some non-native species are great for floral design if not for the environment.

Dried wild flowers

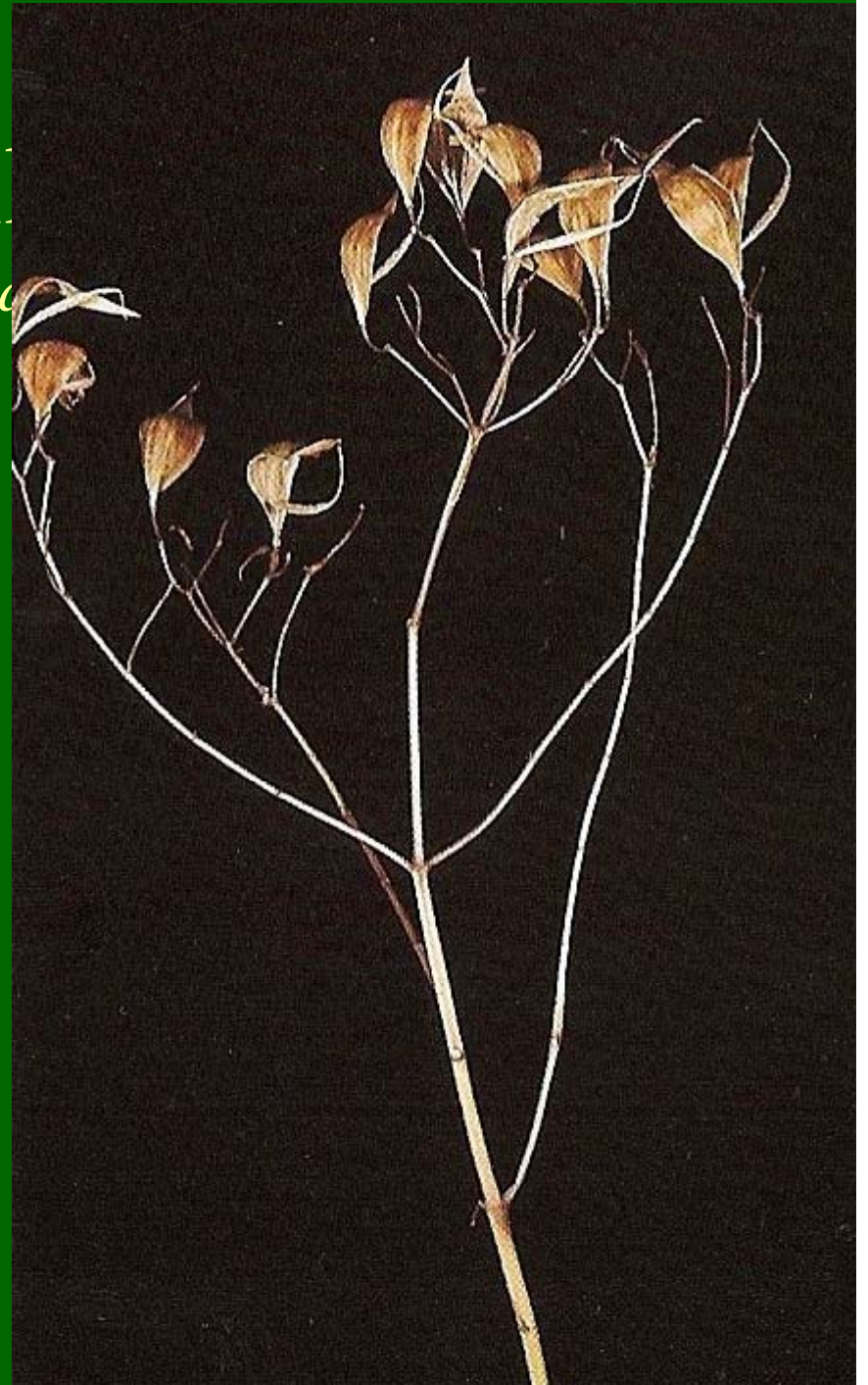
- Many wild flowers are more useful in design when dried
- Flowers are harvested, bundled into manageable bunches with rubber bands, and hung upside-down in a dark place
- Some flowers may be harvested from fields in the dry state

Swamp Milkweed

Asclepias incarnata



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Purple Loosestrife

Lythrum salicaria



- Blooms June – Sept
- Found in wet areas
- Invasive species so cut without remorse
- Red violet flowers are quite long lasting

Blazing star

Litaxis spicata



- Blooms August to October
- Found in dry prairie areas
- Flowers from top of the spike down

Cutleaf Coneflower

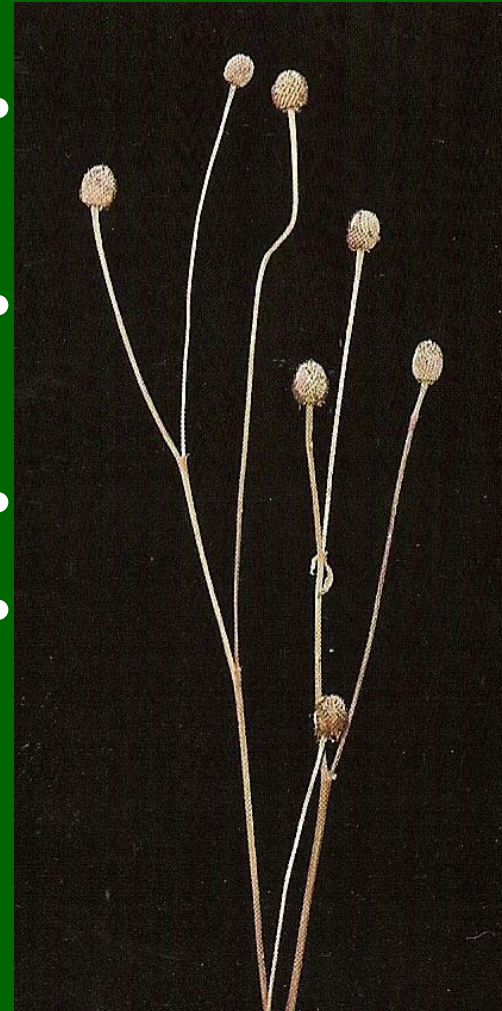
Rudbeckia lacinata



- Plants up to 9 feet tall
- Blooms July to September
- Thrives in heavy soil woodland edges, riverbanks

Prairie coneflower, yellow coneflower

Ratibida pinnata

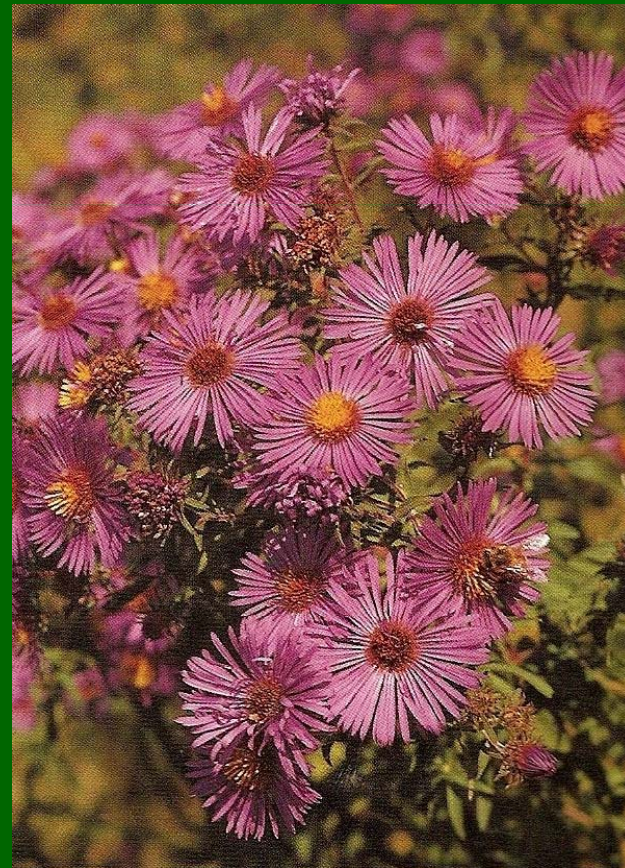
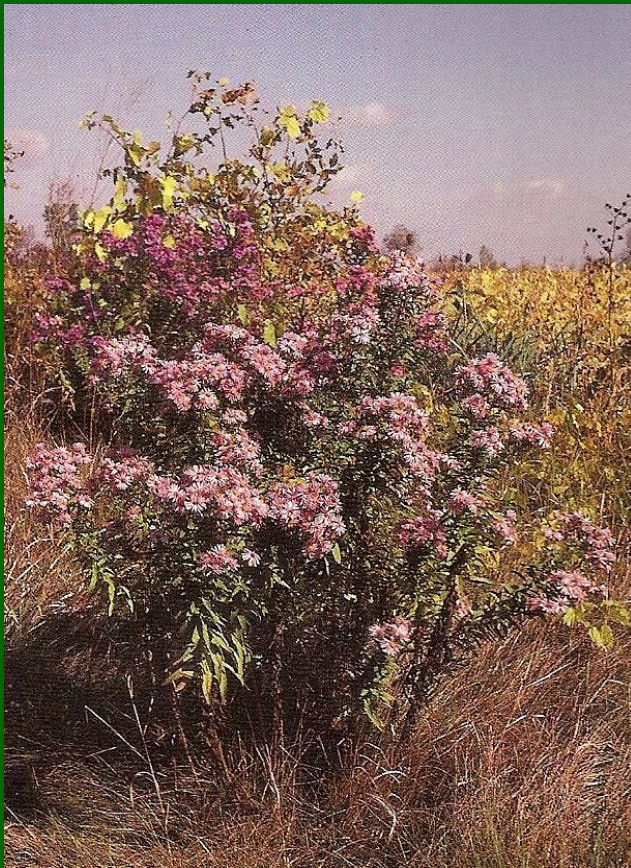


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New England Aster

Aster novae-angliae



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Teasel

Dipsacus sylvestris



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Common Milkweed

Asclepias syriaca

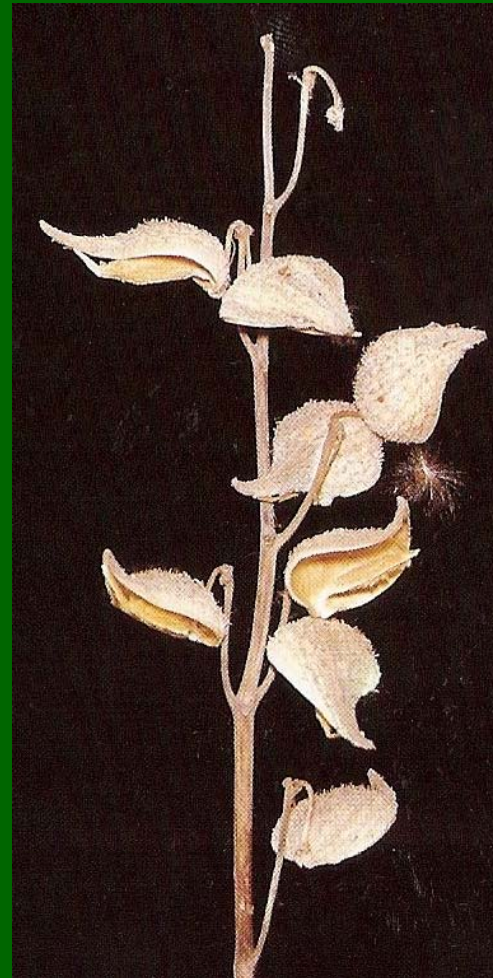


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Black-eyed Susan

Rudbeckia hirta



- The flowers are yellow, and the centers are dark brown.
- The leaves are lanceolate and green.
- The flower heads are dried and brown.

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Queen-Anne's lace

Daucus carota



- Blooms June – September
- Everywhere!
- Long lasting if conditioned properly
- Nice dried material

Common Cattail

Typha latifolia



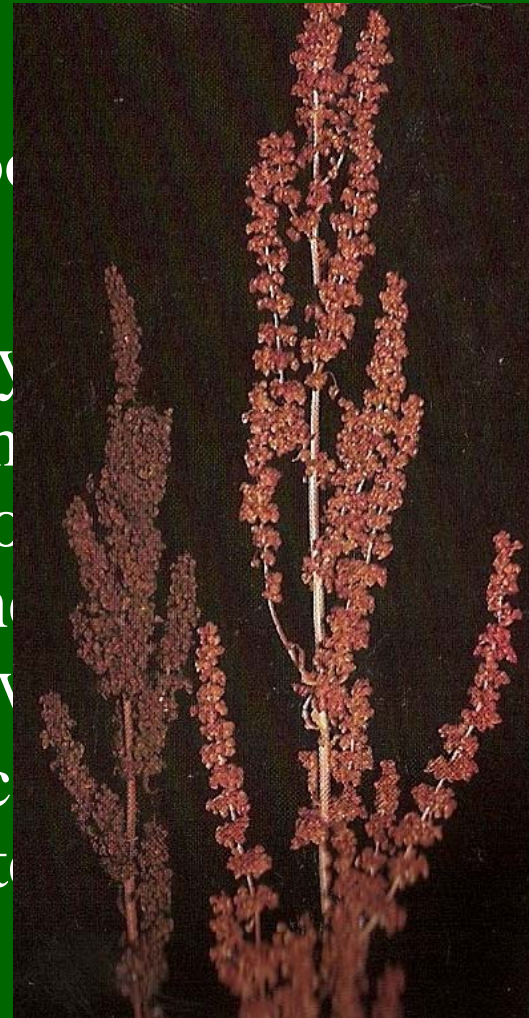
- Bloom begins in May
- Found in marshes and shallow water
- Fresh cats may be used at any stage of development
- Harvest green for drying

Curled Dock

Rumex crispus



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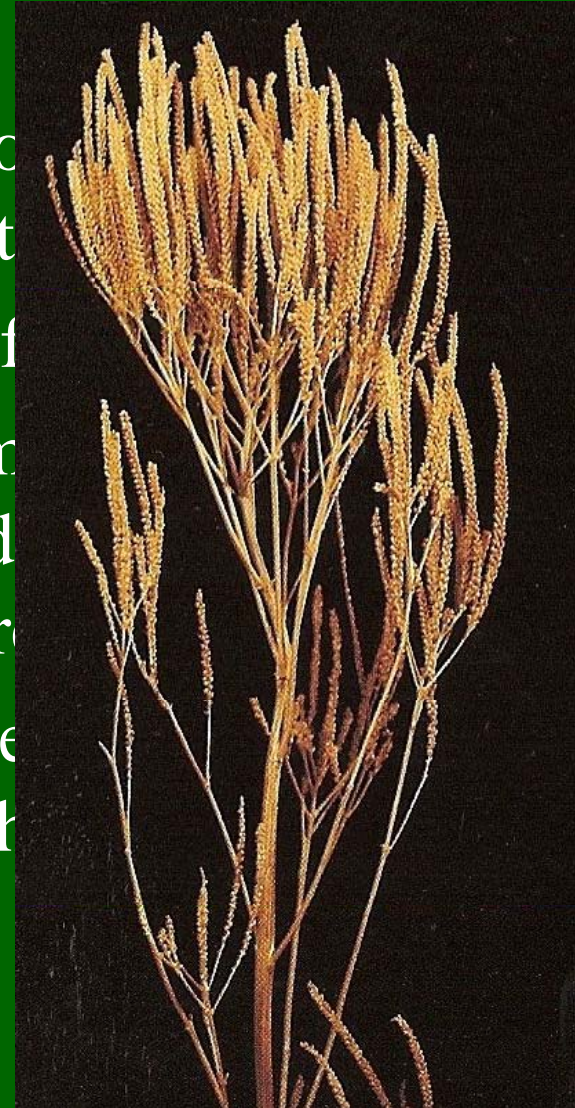


Blue Vervain

Verbena hastata



- Blooms Sept
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Goldenrod

Solidago sp.

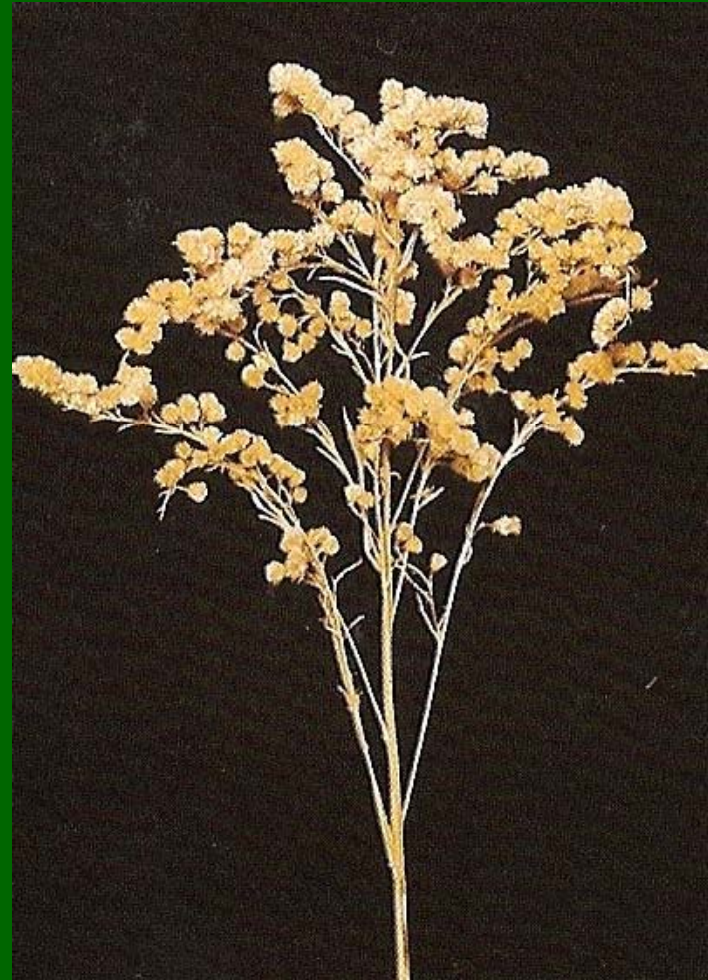


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Purple coneflower

Echinacea purpurea



- Blooms June to October
- 2-3 feet tall
- Open dry woods, prairies, dry fields
- Dried “cones” are attractive

Multiflora Rose

Rosa multiflora









