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Glorious Annuals

Goodwood Gardens

by Heather Jordan Engli, Certified Horticulturalist, Goodwood Gardens

Annuals have regained their rightful respect, having not so very long ago been considered too ordinary for the sophisticated garden. The renewed interest is not surprising as the old standards are now available in many new and improved varieties and there is a great selection of less well-known and underused annuals.

The trailing petunias (Waves, Supertunia, Surfinias, Calibrachoa, etc. Millionbells/Superbells) are full of colour, fast growing, love the sun and require no deadheading or pruning. Impatiens, the standard shade choice, boast both Fanfare (trailing) and Fiestas (beautiful rose-like blooms).

Underused annuals are fun to try in the garden and often serve in a special needs area. Diascia and Nemesia, previous cool weather plants, are now available in much improved heat tolerant varieties. Diascia is best in part shade but both will take the full sun and bloom well into the fall. Nemesia Compact Innocence is very fragrant. If you have not experienced the fragrance of Heliotrope do so this summer. Grow it in the full sun and preferably close to where you sit or walk daily; a great accent plant in containers and baskets on your patio.

Lantana tolerates hot and humid conditions. Their vibrant colours and dark foliage make a strong statement in mass plantings. Angelonia, often called a summer snapdragon, and Pentas are also heat lovers. Gazania is a compact (8 inches), daisy type drought tolerant flower that closes on cloudy days. Gazania foliage (dark green or gray) offers another interesting colour dimension in the garden.

One of the fastest growing annual vines with a huge colour impact is Thunbergia. The yellow, buff or orange flowers have black eyes. It too is a sun lover (or partial shade) and can reach 3 to 4 feet.

No doubt your Grandmother grew Cleome. The newer Sparkler series is heat and sun-tolerant plant and grows bushy and upright, reaching 3 feet tall and wide. It is great for mass plantings.

Torenia is a great performer in the shade, both as a bedding plant and in mixed containers.

Experiment with the unusual annuals this summer and soon they too will become the standard repertoire in the garden.

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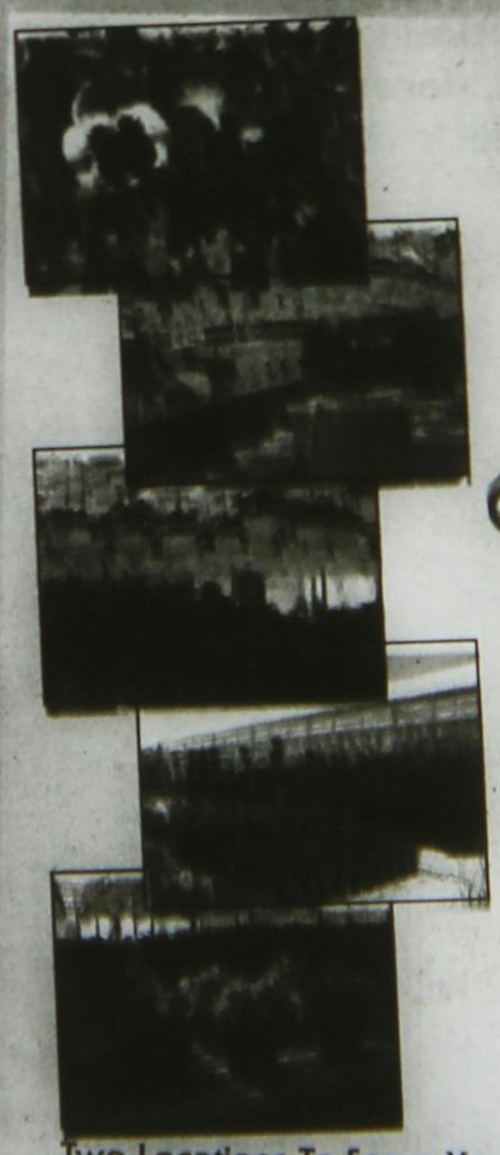

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