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# How to Grow Black-eyed Susans: The Complete Black-eyed Susan Flower Guide



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# Planting, Growing, and Caring for Black-eyed Susans

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 24, 2025



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Beloved by pollinators, black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia hirta*) generally bloom from June to August, often blanketing open fields with their golden-yellow beauty. Learn how to care for this native wildflower, when to cut it back, and how to save seeds for replanting.

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## What Are Black-

The “black eye” of black-eyed Susans refers to the dark brown center of its daisy-like flower head. A member of the aster family, Asteraceae, and native to eastern North America, it has become naturalized in Zones 3 to 9. And while some species of black-eyed Susans have additional names—such as Gloriosa daisies—they all belong to the *Rudbeckia* genus.

BUY SEEDS NOW

Black-eyed Susans grow 1 to 3 feet tall or more with leaves of 6 inches, stalks over 8 inches long, and flowers with a diameter of 2 to 3 inches. Butterflies, [bees](#), and other insects are attracted to the flowers for the nectar. As they drink the nectar, they move pollen from one plant to another, causing it to grow seeds that can move about easily with the wind. [Learn more about our favorite wildflowers.](#)

## ADVERTISEMENT

“The Silvery Checkerspot butterfly uses Rudbeckia species as a host plant,” explains the [University of Maryland](#). “Seed is consumed by songbirds, especially [goldfinches](#).”

In the garden, they do well in landscapes, borders, butterfly gardens, or containers. Also, they are outstanding cut flowers.

Black-eyed Susans are Sun worshipers who forgive neglect and are tough as nails. However, avoid overcrowding these plants or watering their leaves (vs. soil level), which can lead to [fungal disease](#).

Note that varieties can be [annual, biennial, or perennial](#). The popular *Rudbeckia hirta* is treated as a short-lived perennial.

## ADVERTISEMENT

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- [Growing & Selecting Wildflowers](#)
- [How to Grow Coneflowers: The Complete Echinacea Flower Guide](#)
- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)

## PLANTING

The black-eyed Susan thrives in full sunshine. It tolerates partial sun, but it will not bloom as reliably. It's best if the soil is fertile (not poor), though this plant can tolerate tough conditions.

### When to Plant Black-

- Set new plants out in the spring after all danger has passed or plant in the fall. The optimal soil temperature for germination is 70° to 75° F. Do not plant in the hot summer.
- If planting by seed, sow seeds about 6 weeks before the average last frost.

## How to Plant Black-eyed Susan

- Plants should be set 18 inches apart. Remove weeds and loosen the soil. Make a hole a few inches wider than the plant and set it in the hole; backfill it with soil, tamp gently, and water it well.
- If planting from seed indoors, sprinkle seeds on top of the regular seed starting mix. Do not cover the seeds, as they need light to germinate. Plant your seedlings outdoors after any [danger of frost](#) has passed. Since black-eyed Susans can spread between 12 to 18 inches, plant seeds closer to prevent lots of spreading, or plant further apart to make a nice

- Black-eyed Susan spreads by self-seeding (after the first year) and underground rhizomes; this can result in it overtaking other nearby flowers.

## **GROWING**

- Check plants regularly to see if they need watering. Avoid letting them dry out, and avoid excess moisture on the leaves, as this can encourage disease. (Provide plants with proper spacing.)
- Deadhead the flowers any time of year (remove the faded/dead flowers) to prolong blooming and minimize self-seeding.
- Remove dead plant material in the spring to reduce the risk of infection.
- Divide perennial types every 3 to 4 years to ensure healthy plants and prevent excessive spreading.

## **Should You Cut Back Black-Eyed Susans**

When it comes to black-eyed susans, we prefer to delay cutting back until spring.



- This plant is a favorite with wildlife, native insects, and birds with its dried seeds.
- In addition, overwintering birds find protection in plant stubs and ground covers.
- Plus, the mound of foliage will insulate the roots and protect the plant over winter.

However, black-eyed Susans are a big re-seeder. To avoid this, cut the spent flowers back just below the mound of foliage.

## Types

As well as the traditional black-eyed Susans, which grow 1 to 3 feet tall (or more), there are dwarf varieties that reach no more than 1 foot (perfect for containers). Varieties can be annual, biennial, or perennial.

The popular roadside *Rudbeckia hirta* with showy yellow flowers is a biennial in the wild but treated as a short-lived perennial in the garden. It self-seeds abundantly,

return a few more seasons (but you can't always count on it). Some of its many hybrids include:

- **'Autumn Colors'**: yellow, orange, red, and brown flowers; 18- to 24-inch stems
- **'Becky Mixed'**: lemon-yellow, golden-yellow, dark red, and reddish-brown flowers; 10- to 16-inch stems
- **'Prairie Sun'**: All-America Selections winner; 4- to 6-inch bright orange flowers that fade to yellow at the tips; 28- to 23-inch stems. [See AAS Winning Rudbeckia varieties!](#)
- **'Sonora'**: large golden flowers with big, chocolate-brown centers; 12- to 16-inch stems
- **'Toto Gold'**: dwarf type; classic yellow flowers with black centers; 12- to 16-inch stems; ideal for containers

There are also true, long-lasting perennials that will keep coming back and blooming year after year.

for its longevity and a regular plant in late summer and fall gardens

- **'Sweet'** black-eyed Susans (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*), bearing taller flowers and ideal for more naturalized garden or meadow
- **'Gloriosa Daisies'** (*Rudbeckia hirta* 'Gloriosa'), 12 to 36 inches tall and tolerates partial shade; giant, bi-color double flowers.

Finally, some *Rudbeckia* varieties are annuals, such as the **Clasping Sunflower** (*Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*), a low-growing plant for the front of a border garden.

## HARVESTING

Cut flowers for display just before buds completely open. Use large blooms as centerpieces and smaller ones as accents. Change the water every day to keep them fresh. Vase life is 8 to 10 days.

## How to Collect Seeds of a

Once the seed heads are dry and brown, it's time to clip some stems. Pop off the seed heads from the stems and toss them in a small jar; close the lid and shake it to loosen the seedheads. Then, dump the seed heads from the jar into a sieve with a white piece of paper below it. Break up the seed heads in the sieve with your fingers. The seeds will come off and fall through the sieve onto the paper! Fold the paper in half and carefully funnel those seeds into a paper envelope. Close and label the envelope and store it in a cool, dry place.

[Learn more about how to save seeds for next year.](#)

## GARDENING PRODUCTS





## PESTS/DISEASES

Black-eyed Susans are deer-resistant plants.

Diseases: powdery mildew, aster yellows, Botrytis blight, southern blight, angular leaf spot, fungal leaf spot, downy mildew, rust, white smut, Verticillium wilt.

Pests: aphids, nematodes, slugs, and snails

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Black-eyed Susans are meant to symbolize justice. Find out more flower meanings here.
- The genus name *Rudbeckia* honors Swedish scientists Olaus Rudbeck (1630–1702) and his son, Olof Rudbeck (1660–1740).
- The species name *hirta* means “hairy” and refers to the short bristles that cover the leaves.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann

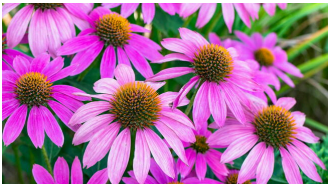


Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it’s not surprising that she and The Old Farmer’s Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

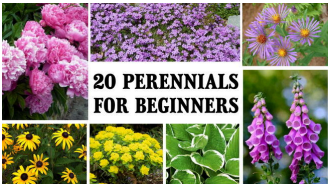
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## COMMENTS

**ADD A COMMENT**

**MARY M OWEN (not verified)** 10 months ago

I JUST PURCHASED A BLACK EYED SUSAN  
PLANT AND 3-4 DAYS LATER THE FLOWERS  
ARE DROOPING.....BEEN WATERING AND PUT  
IN FULL SUN.

ADVERTISEMENT

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 10 months ago

This issue is often related to water-  
ing. Either too much or too little wa-  
ter. To adjust, first, feel the soil. If it's  
dry a couple of inches down, it's time  
for a drink. If it's soggy, give them a  
break from watering. Also, if it's only  
a few days, don't worry as new peren-  
nials need to adjust.

**REPLY**



**Stumbit (not verified)** 12 months ago

It is such a lovely flower that is short and easy to maintain. It grows very easily and it is said to be the first and foremost flower to be grown at any disaster areas. It can be used in art decors even when it is dried.

**REPLY**

**nina Yeckes (not verified)** 1 year 6 months ago

I've had BYS for years in my garden. There is something very dark brown, almost black which has spread all over most of the leaves. Do you know what it is and how should I deal with it.. I'd also like to know how and when to transplant volunteers.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 6 months ago

Hi, Nina. It sounds like your black-eyed Susans have a fungus. The most

is mid- to late spring, though even  
early summer would be fine.  
Good luck!

**REPLY**

---

**Mary (not verified)** 2 years 9 months ago

This year, the deer are eating the black eyed  
susans and cone flowers!!  
Seems nothing is deer resistance.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 2 years ago

Deer will eat anything if they are  
hungry enough but they certainly see  
some plants as candy and others as  
distasteful. Here is a list of deer-re-  
sistant plants:

[https://www.almanac.com/deer-re-  
sistant-plants](https://www.almanac.com/deer-resistant-plants)

**Barba (not verified)** 3 years 8 months ago

Worse than ever this year. What I see are ear-wigs, though I saw a slug elsewhere on the property. What can I do that wont hurt the dog or the good insects?

**REPLY**

**Lisa (not verified)** 1 year 11 months ago

Slugs- Egg shells or anything that is ruff edged.

Baking soda around plant based.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 2 years 9 months ago

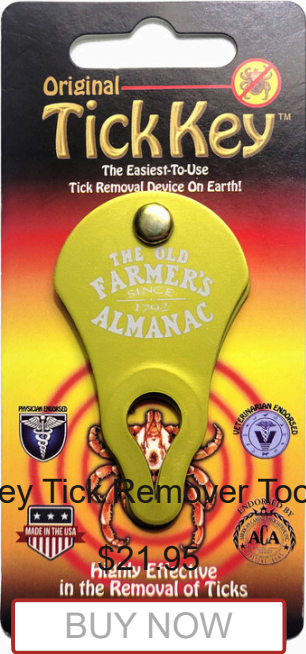
Use neem oil or insecticidal soap.

Search on this site for

natural pesticides: <https://www.almanac.com/organic-pesticides>

**REPLY**

# THE OLD FARMER'S STORE



The image shows a yellow plastic tick remover tool, shaped like a key, mounted on a black and red blister pack. The packaging features the text "Original Tick Key™", "The Easiest-To-Use Tick Removal Device On Earth!", and "THE OLD FARMER'S STORE SINCE 1792 ALMANAC". It also includes a small illustration of a tick and a "MADE IN THE USA" logo. The price is listed as \$21.95.

Tick Key Tick Remover Tool (...)

\$21.95

BUY NOW



The image shows a small, curved sickle hoe with a black metal head and a light-colored wooden handle. The price is listed as \$16.99.

Mini Sickle Hoe

\$16.99

BUY NOW



The image shows a green and orange box for a "Houseplant Care Essentials Kit". The box features three small bottles of "Grow", "Enrich", and "Protect" products. The text on the box includes "We the Wild Plant Care", "Your organic essentials for healthy, happy houseplants.", and "Certified organic For houseplants Backed by science". The price is listed as \$29.99.

Houseplant Care Essentials Kit

\$29.99

BUY NOW



The image shows a white tote bag with a blue handle, featuring a colorful illustration of various birds and foliage. The price is listed as \$24.95.

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\$24.95

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