

2000 Cut Flowers of the Year



Rudbeckia “Indian Summer”

The Fresh Cut Flower of the Year for 2000 is Rudbeckia hirta “Indian Summer”. “Indian Summer” has large 6- to 9-inch wide golden-yellow flowers with dark brown centers. The mostly single flowers are carried atop 2 1/2 – 3 1/2 inch. tall plants and are much larger than other cultivars of Rudbeckia hirta. Stems are strong and easily cut. While technically a biennial or perennial, “Indian Summer” is best grown as an annual. Plants are readily propagated from seed and will flower within 10-14 weeks of sowing.

While the flower period is long (4-5 weeks), multiple plantings may be useful in the South for season-long harvest. Plants are vigorous and will grow in a wide range of soils. Although generally insect and disease free, flower petals may be damaged by grasshoppers. Postharvest life is good, generally 7-10 days. Rudbeckia “Indian Summer” was also selected as an All-America Winner in 1995.

Echinops ritro

The Dried Cut Flower of the Year is Echinops ritro, globe thistle. The metallic blue, ball-shaped flowers are typically dried but can also be used fresh. This long-lived perennial (10+ years) is cold hardy to Zone 4 but also tolerates heat well with a Heat Zone rating of 3-9. Globe thistles are adapted to a wide variety of soils and are drought tolerant. Plants are seed propagated, will flower the second year after planting, and can be cut back after harvest. Plants should be allowed to remain in the ground for many years and will become more productive each year. Globe thistle is virtually insect and disease free but can occasionally host European corn borers in corn-producing areas. Plant height is 2 ½ – 4 feet. Foliage is thistle like with soft spines. Spines harden and stems become more difficult to handle when dried.



Flowers for drying are harvested when well-colored but before flowers are apparent. For fresh cuts, harvest when 1/3 of the florets are flowering. Pollen will show if harvested when more than 1/3 of the florets are open. Vase life of fresh cuts is 7-10 days without preservatives, longer with floral preservatives. Cultivars are available which vary slightly in flower color, vigor and foliage color.