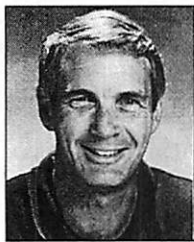


# DRIVING THE DAISIES

## LOTS OF PLANTS IN THE DAISY FAMILY UNDERGOING CHANGE

by Alan Armitage, University of Georgia



The daisy family has always been a favorite among consumers, from the asters along the roadside, the sunflowers basking in the sun, the zinnias in the garden and the chrysanthemums in the greenhouse. It is the largest family in the plant kingdom with about 1300 genera and 21,000 species of shrubs, annuals and perennial plants! Due to its diversity and world distribution, it is not surprising that many daisies have been

selected for their tolerance to adverse environments. Many genera are tough, and this has helped retailers sell to landscapers and gardeners. In our field, a great deal of interest in some of the members has been shown recently and numerous forms are presently being offered to the grower.

Here are seven daisies which I think can be mainstays, four which have been bred, trialed and sold, in some cases with vigor, in the last few years, one which is on my "A" list for near future development and two others peeking out around the corner. I throw the last three out for interest sake. Not all have been trialed as extensively in the greenhouse or the landscape as should have been but trends are somewhat visible on them. All of the following will likely be grown from vegetative cuttings or tissue culture, although seed production is looking to be an important part of this class of plants in the future.

All require full light conditions, moderate water (not a mum), a single pinch, and some may benefit from growth regulators. Cycocel, B-Nine and Florel have been used effectively 1-2 weeks after pinching.

### Seven Picks from Armitage:

#### Three genera one should not ignore

**Arctotis**, South African Daisy, has large colored single daisy flowers and gray-green foliage. We know the least about this genus, but I think it can be important. Little known about culture, but is similar to *Gazania* in response to environment. Seed was main means of propagation, but likely will be seen from cuttings. Problems of older material, flowers close in afternoon, not as great a problem now. Plants rot easily, watch water. Photoperiod does not seem to be particularly effective. Finish time from a liner to 4" pot, 10-12 wks. Many cvs have been bred, mainly seed in England and Europe. Interest in Israel as well.

Ability to produce good looking plants today, poor. Potential for future, excellent. A sleeper, a good one in 3-5 years.

**Euryops**, Yellow Daisy, has been seen in gardens in the UK, southern Europe and the West Coast for many years. Lovely shiny yel-

low flowers and bright green leaves mark this woody plant. Useful in landscape and in containers. Some breeders, mainly from overseas, are looking at the plant as a possible greenhouse/landscape plant. Present problems are height, flower time (16-20 wks), and sustained flowering over the season. However, I believe that if someone jumps on this, they will lead the pack.

Ability to produce good looking plants today, poor. Potential for future, good. Landscapers will eat it up.

**Venidium**, African Painted Daisy, has been in the garden trade for years and years, and is probably the most stunning of the group. Seed have been sold throughout the world more so than in America; have been crossed with *Arctotis* and others and possibilities exist for emergence of this genus. Beautiful flowers, but are they different enough from *gazanias* and *gerberas* to warrant production space? Ease of greenhouse culture will determine if this group emerges. I believe that with a little breeding to produce clonal material which maintains good flower habit, plants have a good chance to gain a landscape and retail following. Susceptible to root rots, prefers cool temperatures. Need breeding work to increase heat tolerance for national sales. At least 5 years off before material is acceptable for large greenhouse production. But look out when new material comes on line.

Ability to produce good looking plants today, fair. Potential for future, good.

#### Four better known ones, will only get better

**Argyranthemum**, Marguerite Daisy, have been grown many years under the name of *Chrysanthemum frutescens*. However, good breeding in Europe, South Africa and Australia have incorporated other species to produce some good hybrids, making this the best of the daisies today. Easy to grow, no chilling or photoperiod needed. Many fine cultivars available, best for landscape performance is still 'Butterfly', but 'Summer Melody', 'Midas Gold' and 'Summer Daisy Stars Pink' also looking good in greenhouse and field. Finish time from a liner to 4" pot, 10-12 wks.

Ability to produce good looking plants today, excellent. Potential for future, excellent. My winner in next two-three years. Landscapers love these plants and as flowering time is extended, market should remain strong.

**Osteospermum**, Cape Daisy, has really been tearing up the market place in the last two years. Sales have skyrocketed with the explosion of colors and better distribution. Excellent breeding is madly continuing, mainly to incorporate additional colors, branching and heat tolerance in plants. Plants need to be chilled around 45F for 6 weeks for best flowering. Without chilling, few flowers occur. Great energy saving plant in the North. Lots of breeding done in Denmark, the land of hot summers. Problem with lack of heat tolerance has caught up with plants in the landscape; in most parts of the coun-

try, flowering ceases in summer and shrubs result. Might get return of flowering as temperatures cool, but not what consumer wants. Many cultivars available, Sunny series reasonable, Sides series better, 'Mira' also good, no doubt more and better cultivars on the way. Ability to produce good looking plants today, good. Finish time from a liner to 4" pot, 12-14 wks.

Potential for future, good in North, but I foresee decline until better cultivars are introduced in the next couple of years. Landscapers enjoy it but cannot afford down time. As longer flowering period is bred, will be mainstay.

**Helichrysum**, Everlasting Daisy, has gone through an exciting breeding and selection phase and sales have quieted a little. However, from the greenhouse perspective, plants are quick to turn over (~12 wks) and require no special care. A single pinch is useful. Cultivar that I really like for sales potential is 'Matilda Yellow' with good height, robust growth and ease of production. 'Spectrum' is also good for color, still a little big but outstanding otherwise. 'Golden Buttons', a much different species, is outstanding in the landscape but does not look as good in the greenhouse. 'Blushing Beauty' has also impressed me. Ability to produce good looking plants today, excellent, particularly 'Matilda Yellow'.

Potential for future, good, will need additional marketing at retail level. Landscapers will embrace if material is sufficiently robust.

**Brachycome**, Swan River Daisy, was dismissed in the past as too wimpy for most landscapes, but seed entries ('Bravo') and vegetative material are changing the perception. In the greenhouse, I really like the small-flowered cvs like 'Mauve Delight' which are no-brainers, requiring a single shearing and not much else to finish in 4" pot. Others like the bigger flowered 'Jumbo Mauve' are not as heavily branched but look almost like mums.

Ability to produce good looking plants today, excellent. Potential for future, good. American public and retailers have not quite figured these out, and I think sales may stall without effective promotion. A little too small for the landscape trade.



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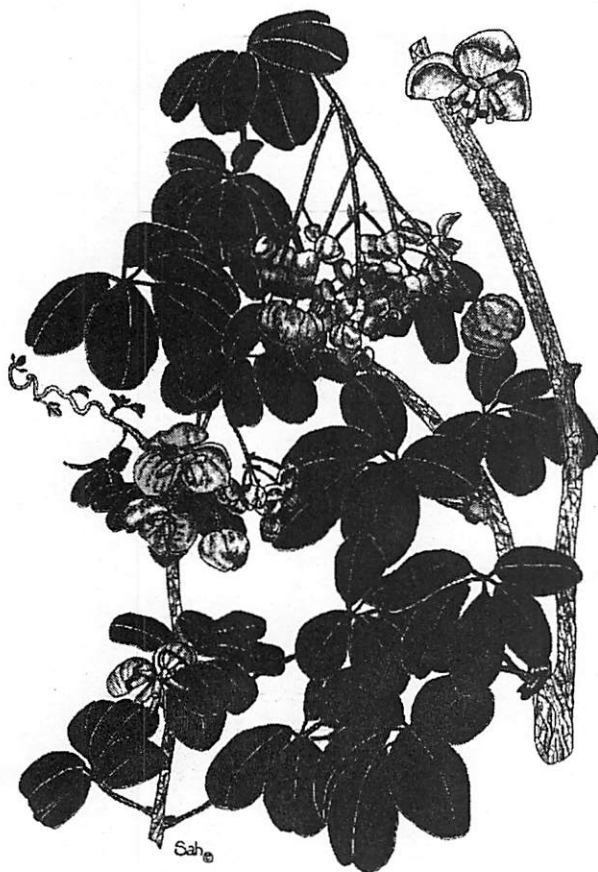
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