

Armitage 88

Tips of the Trade

by ALLAN ARMITAGE

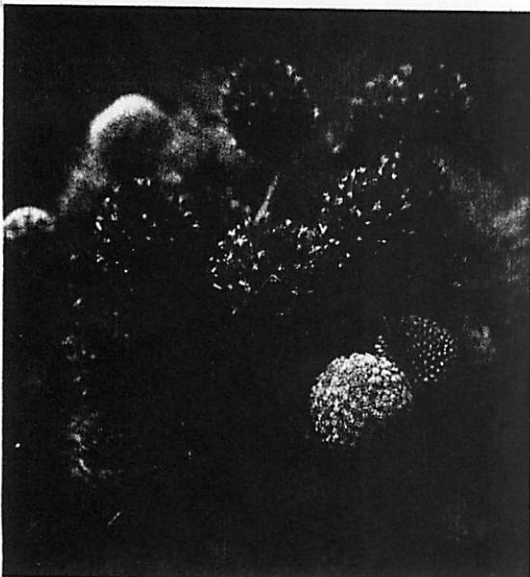
Try Unusual Annuals for Cut Flowers

Editor's note: Last month, Dr. Armitage began his recommendations for unusual annuals that can be used as cut flowers. The following is a continuation of that list.

AS florists, mass merchandisers, and consumers demand more unusual cut flowers, more and more annuals are being produced by cut flower growers. In some cases, little more than the species is available, but in others, a wide range of cultivars has been selected.

Some annuals that have potential or are currently being grown commercially as cut flowers are being researched in the field flower program

Some red gomphrena cultivars fade in warm temperatures.



at the University of Georgia. Some of these, as well as others that require cooler temperatures than we have in Georgia, are included.

● Globe amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa*). Globular flowers in purple, rose, red, orange, and white are produced all summer. Plants tolerate a great deal of heat although some of the red cultivars become less brilliant in warm temperatures. Production is copious; flowers may be dried as well as used fresh.

G. haageana is a species with burnt orange flowers and more elliptical flower head. A lovely cut flower. Many cultivars of *G. globosa* are available, but few, if any, of *G. haageana*.

● Annual statice (*Limonium sinuatum*). An old favorite, renewed breeding efforts have resulted in more disease resistance, better yields, and additional colors. The plant is heat-tolerant, but colors are more stable with cooler summer temperatures.

Used as a greenhouse crop for winter forcing. Long-day treatment and high light promote flowering. Cool temperatures (below 55° F) applied to seedling stage prior to long-day treatment also promote flowering.

● Rattail statice (*L. suwoworii*). Produces long, narrow, rose-pink to dull red inflorescences. It is popular in Europe as a filler crop, but is not grown to any extent in the U.S.

Requires cool temperatures for best inflorescence elongation. Although many cultivars are available in annual statice, few are available for rattail statice.



● Tweedia (*Oxypetalum caeruleum*). Tweedia produces pale blue, 5-petaled flowers and is particularly useful in bouquets.

Tolerates heat well and may be grown in southern states with no problem. In the greenhouse, high light and 70°-75° F day temperatures are ideal.

The cut ends exude a milky sap; dipping in dilute isopropyl alcohol will coagulate any exudate. Shelf life appears to be 10-14 days. The spent flowers turn light purple and should be removed.

● Velvet sage (*Salvia leucantha*). An excellent cut flower, but may be produced from terminal cuttings only. Plants tolerate heat well and are useful for southern states. It may be a perennial in areas of mild winters. Production begins in early fall and continues through frost. Yields are exceptional, well over 150 stems per plant have been recorded.

Space 24 inches apart outdoors and 12-18 inches apart in the greenhouse. Plants require short days to flower and may be forced in the greenhouse. Shelf life benefits from a 5-minute pulse of 0.2 mM silver thiosulfate (STS). A species with an excellent future, though no cultivars are presently available. **GG**

About the author: Dr. Allan Armitage is associate professor, Department of Horticulture, University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602.