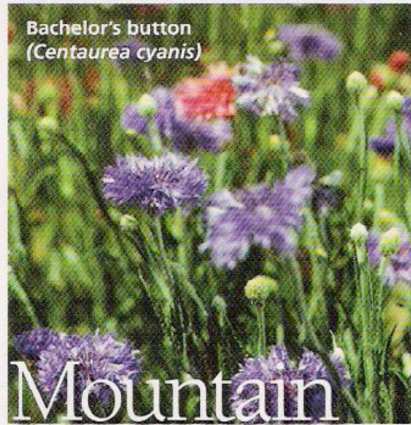




# Seeds to Scatter

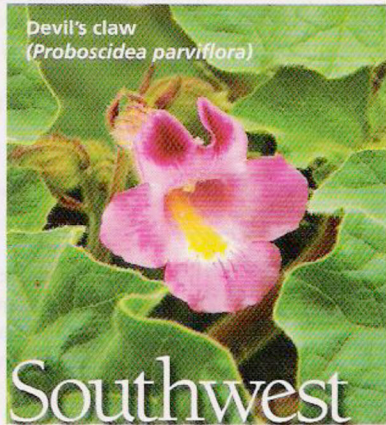
Your garden can burst into bloom with only a little effort if you follow the advice of our regional garden editors about sprinkling seeds into the soil.



Bachelor's button  
(*Centaurea cyanis*)

Mountain

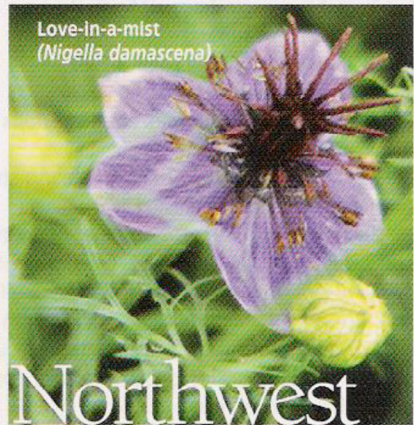
King Au



Devil's claw  
(*Proboscidea parviflora*)

Southwest

Scott Calhoun



Love-in-a-mist  
(*Nigella damascena*)

Northwest

Ed Gohlich

Scattering seeds randomly in the garden, rather than tucking seedlings into neat rows, is a fun and creative way to garden. Many annuals thrive when sown directly outside and reach mature size in a short time. Some even self-sow every year.

When broadcasting seed, divide the planting area into smaller sections for even distribution. Mix small seed varieties with vermiculite to make the coverage easier to see. Lightly rake the seed and soil. Keep soil moist until seeds have germinated.

Bachelor's button (*Centaurea cyanis*), with its old-fashioned appeal, can be scattered in the fall or in early spring. Its charming flowers, in bright blue, pale pink, rose, and white, adapt to most conditions and love the sun. Bachelor's button usually blooms in late spring (fall seeded) or early summer. It almost flourishes on neglect—overwatering and too much fertilizing can cause the plant to grow tall and floppy.

Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*) flowers on stems 4–6 feet tall in shades of rose, hot pink, shell pink, and white. For smaller areas, choose the 'Sonata' series, which grows 18–24 inches tall. Sun-loving and drought-tolerant, cosmos bloom from midsummer to frost in well-drained soil. Scatter seeds for a cutting garden or for a wildflower look. Thin seedlings to about 12 inches apart to avoid overcrowding.

Contributed by Paula A. Yantorno, an avid gardener living in Denver.

The onset of the summer rainy season in the Southwest brings fresh opportunities for growing vibrant and unusual summer bloomers. Below are two of my favorite warm-season annuals to grow from seed.

Devil's claw (*Proboscidea parviflora*), a wildflower named for the imposing curved shape of its seed head, is related to sesame and is sure to grab attention in your summer garden. The flowers resemble snapdragons and are cream and purple with yellow-striped throats. The foliage—big round leaves with sticky stems—is also attractive. The seed heads, whose fiber is a traditional basket-weaving material for the Tohono O'odham Indians in central Arizona, turn a beautiful black color in late fall.

With hot colors back in vogue in the fashion world, why not include some yellow, gold, and scarlet flowers in your garden? *Cosmos sulfureus* 'Bright Lights' is a seed blend selected for compactness (3 feet high versus 5 feet for standard *C. sulfureus*). It blooms through summer and fall. This Mexican native attracts pipevine swallowtail butterflies. In the Southwest, it is best sown outdoors just before the summer rains begin (usually in late June).

Contributed by Scott Calhoun, a garden designer and freelance writer living in Tucson.

It took a visit to England's Great Dixter Garden for me to realize the potential of a packet of seed. Head gardener Fergus Garrett calls the garden's self-seeders "the final layering of the garden, the element that brings a smile to your face." He estimates more than 60 percent of the plants in this famously flowery garden self-seed every year. All you need to sow seed successfully in your own garden is some bare soil, preferably light, loamy, and finely textured.

By late April the soil has warmed up enough to scatter the seed of love-in-a-mist (*Nigella damascena*), which has lacy foliage and pretty blossoms in shades of blue, followed by ornamental pods. I use these as filler in every bouquet from June through August, and they dry beautifully.

Tall, graceful Shirley poppies (*Papaver rhoeas*) in an array of sherbet shades come easily from seed to fill in along a fence line or at the back of the border.

To feed the birds and enliven the late summer garden, I sow sunflower seed in late May, from the short, fluffy 'Teddy Bear' to willowy 'Kong'. Scatter the seeds of these old-fashioned favorites, and like at Great Dixter, they'll happily re-seed themselves in your garden every year.

Contributed by Valerie Easton, who writes a weekly garden column for the Seattle Times newspaper.