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# Wild looks start now

Sow wildflowers this fall for a spring spectacle

BY SHARON COHOON  
PHOTOGRAPH BY NORM PLATE

To reap the rewards of a successful wildflower display next spring, you need to do a certain amount of homework in fall. That principle is well illustrated by the impressive show of yellow desert marigold (*Baileya multiradiata*), pink-flowered Parry's penstemon (*P. parryi*), and pinkish lavender *Verbena gooddingii* in Scott Calhoun's front yard in the Civano community of Tucson.

Before planting, Calhoun broke up the compacted soil with a jackhammer. Then he laid down a mulch of decomposed granite mixed with larger stones. The mineral mulch was partially for appearance, giving the yard a "less uniform, more wild look," says Calhoun.

He sowed the seeds in October, broadcasting them generously over the cultivated ground. Calhoun used about a pound of seeds, which he purchased from an Arizona supplier, Wild Seed. As it turned out, the wildflowers really liked the rocky mulch and "germinated like crazy," he says. After the first season of bloom, Calhoun harvested about 2 pounds of penstemon seeds.

**SOURCE:** Wild Seed (602/276-3536 for a catalog) sells native Southwest desert wildflowers by the packet, ounce, and pound. ✿

Flower spikes of Parry's penstemon form a pink haze over cactus and verbena.