



Australian Daisies

Introduction

The Australian daisy family of plants is very large with over 900 species, though some are not suitable for cultivation.

The flower of the daisy consists of a collection of small one-seeded, stalk-less flowers (disc florets). Surrounding the disc florets is a ring of what looks like petals, (ray florets); their main purpose is to attract insect pollinators.



Brachyscome

Growing daisies

- Daisies look best when planted in groups or drifts in the garden, creating a sea of colour.
- An open sunny position will suit most, but there are some that prefer a shady spot such as *Brachyscome formosa*, Pilliga Daisy or *Brachyscome iberidifolia*.
- Well-drained but moist soils are usually required, with a few that grow in very wet locations. *Brachyscome segmentosa* and *Brachyscome diversifolia* are both suitable for growing in a bog garden.
- All daisies like to be regularly fed with a general all-purpose fertilizer.
- The perennial species enjoy a thick layer of mulch covering their root systems. However, if the same organic mulch is used around the annual species, there will be little if any self-seeding. Use sand or gravel as a mulch around annual daisies to allow for self-seed germination.

BEWARE: Slugs and snails love tender young daisy seedlings, so use a suitable baiting program.



Floral arrangements

Daisies can be divided into two distinct groups:

- Soft petal flowers
- Stiff paper like petal flowers

Most of the paper-like or everlasting flowers can be dried and used in floral arrangements.

Pick the flowers just before the buds burst open, and depending upon the stem thickness they can be either:

- Bunched and hung upside down in a cool, dry, airy room away from direct sunlight
- Or the stem can be cut 1cm below the flower head and thin florist wire inserted up the stem into the base of the flower. Leave to dry upright in a cool dry airy room away from direct sunlight.

Reject any flowers that have been damaged.

Annual daisies to grow

Brachyscome iberidifolia, Swan River Daisy, grows as a slender, upright plant, with light green, finely divided leaves. The flowers are about 2.5cm diam. and held above the foliage. The flower colours range from purple, mauve, through all the blue shades to white. Sow the seeds in autumn and winter for a spring and summer flowering. Suitable for sun or shade, clay or sandy soil conditions.

Rhodanthe chlorocephala ssp. *rosea*, Pink Paper Daisy, has erect or ascending, slender stems with grey-green foliage. The flowers have stiff colourful papery bracts ranging from white through all shades of the pinks to dark pink, 1.5 - 6cm diam. Sow in autumn for a spectacular spring display. Grow in a sunny position.

Rhodanthe manglesii, Pink Sunray, has interesting heart shaped greyish-green leaves along thin wiry stems. The graceful silver buds open to pink or white papery flowers 2-3cm across. Sow the seed in an open sunny position in autumn for a spring display.

Schoenia filifolia ssp. *subulifolia*, Showy Everlasting Daisy, is an erect plant to 50cm with bright green leaves. Each stem terminates with a 3cm diam. intense bright yellow flower, producing a magnificent display.

Perennial daisies to grow

Brachyscome multifida, Cut-leaf Daisy, is a long flowering easy to grow daisy with deeply divided leaves. Growing 30cm x 1.5m, this daisy is almost always in flower with pale blue 2cm diameter flowers. There are also pink and white forms available. A dark mauve form marketed as *B. 'Break of Day'* can be grown in most soils and situations.

Brachyscome multifida var. *dilatata* has much finer foliage and a compact growth habit, the flowers are also smaller.

Brachyscome Formosa, 'Pilliga Posy'. This dainty daisy produces 3cm diameter cerise flowers on single stems above spoon shaped purplish-green lobed leaves. *B. formosa* will send up new suckers around the parent plant, but is not an invasive plant.

Chrysocephalum apiculatum, Common Everlasting, can be quite variable in its growth habit, depending upon its location in the wild. Common Everlasting has a silver-green appearance, growing to about 50cm tall. The flower heads are yellow to orange in loose heads on leafless stems,



from spring to autumn. Plants can become untidy, but do not cut them back until the new growth appears at base of the plant in autumn. Grow in a sunny position.

Chrysocephalum baxteri, White Everlasting, grows into a small mound with bright green foliage. The flower heads are about 3cm across with shiny white bracts surrounding a central yellow disc. *C. baxteri* can be grown in a container or a sunny well drained spot in the garden.

Ixodia achillaeoides is an upright shrub to 1.5m with glossy green sticky foliage. The small white flowers are displayed in large terminal heads. *Ixodias* can be grown in sandy to loamy soils in a sunny position. They have been a popular cut flower for many years.

Rhodanthe anthemoides, Chamomile Sunray, is a small shrub 30 x 80cm with blue-green or grey-green scented foliage and a profusion of small white flowers in spring.

All *R. anthemoides* do best in a rich well-drained soil with light shade during the hottest part of the day. Trim off old growth when new shoots show in autumn. An excellent small plant for planting in containers or rockery gardens. In recent years there have been a number of cultivars released.

R. anthemoides 'Paper Baby' has a dense growth habit. Wine red or deep pink rounded buds are formed in winter.

R. anthemoides 'Paper Cascade' as the name suggests has a weeping or cascading growth habit. The long narrow pendulous flower buds are ruby red and quite pointed, opening to a white star-shaped flower. Paper Cascade makes a lovely hanging basket specimen.

R. anthemoides 'Paper Star' has white buds which appear during winter.

R. anthemoides 'Sunray Snow' has pink buds and white star-shaped flowers.

Olearia phlogopappa, Dusty Daisy Bush, is a variable shrub up to 1.5m with dusty grey-green foliage. The colour ranges from white to shades of mauve and pink, with a yellow disc centre. A semi-shaded position in a moist but well drained soil will produce the best growth.

Xerochrysum bracteatum syn *Bracteantha bracteate*, Golden Everlasting, can grow into a bush 1 x 1m with strong robust stems and grey-green to bright green leaves. The large terminal flower heads are in shades of yellow and produced during the warmer months.

There are a number of cultivars available.

- *X. bracteatum* 'Cockatoo' has pale lemon to cream flowers and looks great when planted beside Dargon Hill Monarch.
- *X. bracteatum* 'Dargon Hill Monarch' has large bright yellow flowers on long stems, forming an outstanding bushy perennial.
- *X. bracteatum* 'Diamond Head' is a compact low growing plant. 20 x 60cm. The dark green foliage and small bright yellow flower heads make it a popular garden choice.

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