

Cultural Details: **Flowers for Drying**

The popularity of dried flowers is now well established in the UK with a ready year round market for dried specimens. These can be sold either as complete arrangements or more simply as simple bunches of single species. Gaining in popularity with some outlets are bulk displays of material with consumers able to select their purchases on a 'pick & mix' basis.

Dried flowers can provide an easily grown profitable crop which offer a high return for limited labours and outlay. Most annuals are quick to mature, make little demand on the soil with little fertilizer requirement. Perennial choices require little other than general maintenance. All of course offer a long 'shelf life' for sales once dried!

There are many varieties and species which can be dried using varying techniques, with those that are the most difficult to dry commanding very high prices. However, many are easy to grow and can be simply air dried in cool dry conditions.

Many books and leaflets have been written on drying techniques, however experimentation is often the best way to ensure good results.

Pick flowers at different stages of opening until the optimum is found and likewise try different drying times and temperatures until the best is achieved.

Suggested species which can be grown for dried flower use are listed in the Moles Seeds Catalogue. This leaflet should be used in conjunction with the Catalogue, which contains cultural instructions for growing each of the items included here. Basically varieties listed as Hardy Annual can be sown direct into rows outside from April onwards, Annuals are sown under glass then transplanted outdoors after the last frost, Biennials are sown in May June the year before flowering, and Perennials the same as biennials except they flower for a number of years, rather than dying after the end of the first flowering season.

Drying and storage information.

Achillea (Yarrow) Perennial

A range of types, from the yellow, flat heads of Cloth of Gold, to the masses of smaller, double white flowers of The Pearl. Cut when in full flower, throughout the summer, hang the bunches upside down, and dry at moderate speed.

Acroclineum (Sunray) Hardy Annual

Daisy-like flowers in red, pink and white with contrasting centres. Harvest before fully open, hang bunches upside down, dry at moderate speed.

Amaranthus caudatus (Love Lies Bleeding) Hardy Annual

Tassel-like flowers of green or red. Harvest in full flower, and leave the leaves on initially. Dry the trailing types upright, and the ones with upright flower spikes upside down, to keep their shape.

Ammobium (Winged Everlasting) Hardy Annual

Small white daisy-like flowers with yellow centres, strong stiff stems. Harvest stems when flowers are only half open, hang bunches upside down, and dry quickly to maintain flower colour.

Anethum graveolens (Dill) Hardy Annual

Resembling a yellow-flowered cow parsley, harvest either at flowering or seedling stage, dry upside down.

Bells of Ireland (*Molucella*) Hardy Annual

Green bell-like flowers along the stem. Harvest stems when lower bells still look green, remove leaves, hang upside down and dry slowly.

Carthamus (Safflower) Annual

Thistle like flowers of orange or yellow on sturdy stems. Harvest when several flowers have opened on the stem, hang upside down, and dry quickly in the dark to retain leaf colour.

Celosia spicata (Annual)

Feathery flowers of pink or purple on dark red-green stems. Generally grown under glass, harvest in full flower, leave the leaves on the stem, hang upside down and dry quickly to maintain colour.

Chives (*Allium*) Perennial

Round, purple flowerheads on long stems. Harvest as flowers open, fleshy stems so handle carefully, dry slowly upside down in small bunches.

Clary Monarch Mixed (*Salvia hormineum*) Hardy Annual

Bears 'bracts' (coloured leaves towards the ends of the stems) of purple, pink or white. Harvest when fully developed, and dry slowly upside down in bunches.

Cornflower Tall Types (*Centaurea*) Hardy Annual

Well known fresh/dried Summer flower in shades of blue, pink, red, purple and white. Pick stems when flowers have just opened, and hang upside down to dry immediately, to prevent wilting.

Craspedia Globosa (Annual)

Small yellow ball of flowers on the end of a long strong stem. Pick when in full flower, dry fairly rapidly for best results.

Dipsacus (Fuller's Teasel) Biennial

Very striking seed heads on tall, spiky stems, harvest in the Winter when dried out, or for fresher look, harvest in flower, and dry in dark to retain colour.

Echinops ritro (Globe Thistle) Perennial

Grey-green foliage and grey-blue flowers, spine-free stems.. Cut when buds are about to open, and hang upside down to dry.

Eryngium (Sea Holly) Perennial

Steel-blue flowerheads with attractive spiky foliage. Pick when flower have opened and hang upside down to dry.

Eucalyptus Gunnii (Gum) Perennial

'Juvenile' foliage produced by young plants, and older plants cut hard back. Used as a filler. Cut and hang upside down to dry slowly so its colour is retained.

Globe Artichoke (Cynara) Green Globe – see veg section of Catalogue - Perennial

Produces massive thistle-like flowers. Stems can be cut in bud ,in full flower, or as seedhead. Such a massive flower takes a long time to dry, in a warm place.

Gomphrena Sunburst (Globe Amaranth) Annual

Tall stems with round flowerheads of pinks, purples and white. Harvest in full flower and dry in bunches upside down.

Gourd Ornamental (Annual)

Wide range of interesting shapes and colour combinations, with rough and smooth skins. Harvest through the Summer period, and dry singly in a warm location, indoors.

Grass (Annual and Perennial types)

A wide range of different flower forms and habits. Harvest just as the flowers are opening and dry in the dark to retain the green colouration, otherwise wait until the stems have dried naturally, and harvest then.

Helichrysum (Straw Flower) Hardy Annual

Both the tall varieties, and more modern dwarf types like Chico, will yield a plentiful supply of flowerheads; our King Size series is available in nine separate colours. Other species are also listed, which are suitable for drying. Pick the flowers in bud, ideally early in the morning, then wire the flowers whilst they are fresh and soft, then leave to dry.

Honesty (Lunaria) Biennial

Useful for its papery thin oval-shaped seed heads. Pick the stems as soon as the seed pods are formed, then dry them carefully as they are fragile.

Larkspur (Delphinium consolida) Hardy Annual

Flower spikes in blues, reds, pinks, purples and white. Cut the stems when nearly all the florets are open, and hang upside down to dry.

Lonas inodora (Hardy Annual)

Button-like yellow flowers on compact plants. Cut when the flowers are fully open and dry upside down in bunches.

Nigella damascena (Love in a mist) and *orientalis* Transformer (Hardy Annuals)
Grown mainly for their decorative seed pods, though *damascena* can also be dried in flower, so long as this is done quickly. Harvest pods as soon as they are formed, so they keep their colour.

Papaver somniferum (Poppy) Hardy Annual

Grown for its seed pods which are a common sight in dried arrangements. The heads are harvested and dried in bunches when they have reached a greyish colour – experiment with harvesting at different stages.

Physalis franchetti (Chinese Lantern) Perennial

Bright orange seed pods used for winter decoration. Harvest the pods in the Autumn and remove the leaves. Dry the stems upright or in open boxes.

Rhodanthe manglesii (Helipterum) Hardy Annual

Treat the same as *Acroclineum*, to which it is related. Has smaller flowers of pinks or white.

Scabiosa stellata Ping Pong (Hardy Annual)

Ball-shaped papery flowerheads. Harvest as soon as seedheads are formed, to keep the colour, and dry in small bunches.

Statice Sinuata (Limonium) Annual

One of the best fresh and dried Summer flowers available! In a very wide range of colours, and attractive to butterflies when flowering, as are a large proportion of the flowers in this leaflet. Pick flowers when fully open, tie into loose bunches, and dry in the dark to retain the flower colour.

Statice dumosa (*tatarica*) Perennial

Important bouquet filler with its starry white flowers. Harvest and dry as for *sinuata*.

Sunflower (*Helianthus*) Hardy Annual

A wide range of flower forms and colours is available – mostly sold fresh but with some care can be dried; ask for our separate leaflets on this species.

Xeranthemum (Hardy Annual)

Papery flowerheads of pink or white on wiry stems. An easy to grow dried flower – treat as *Acroclineum*.

Zea (Corn) Hardy Annual

Our strawberry corn is a highly decorative mixture of small, round cobs. Harvest when the cob has dried out on the plant, and harvest and store in a dry place.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.