



Sedums Deserve a Place in the Garden

If you mention Autumn Joy in conversation with other gardeners most nod in recognition. Mention Angelina, Vera Jameson, or John Creech and puzzled looks may be the result.

All belong to a diverse group of plants in the stonecrop family, botanically known as sedum, that deserve a place in your garden.

These succulent-looking plants are easy to grow and quite versatile. Sedums are not demanding. Their only requirement is good drainage – they will not survive in soggy soil. They will grow well in poor, sandy or rocky soil, and they thrive in full sun or light shade. Sedums are very hardy surviving our northern Illinois winters without a shiver.

Some varieties grow so low to the ground they work best as groundcovers and can be planted between stepping stones or at the front edge of a garden. Others look beautiful planted in the middle of the perennial border partnered with daylilies, irises or ornamental grasses. Their drought tolerance and low maintenance also make them good candidates for containers gardens where their foliage looks fresh from spring through fall.

For a low-growing groundcover, consider Weihenstephaner Gold. Attractive scalloped foliage turns red in the fall. Golden yellow flowers appear in June and then turn into red seed heads.



Another low-grower, Angelina has brilliant golden yellow, mat forming needle-like foliage all season. Yellow flowers top the foliage in June and July. If Angelina is planted in light shade, the foliage will be less golden and more chartreuse, but just as pretty.

The medium size of some sedums make them ideal fillers to complement border favorites like coneflowers, Russian sage and phlox. Matrona has dark gray foliage with pink tones and soft pink flowers in August. It reaches 18 to 24 inches tall.

Autumn Joy is the most often planted sedum for good reason. Green fleshy leaves are topped in early summer with broccoli-like flowers that turn rosy pink, then russet in fall. If you don't deadhead, the flowers will add beautiful texture to the winter garden.

Its rigidly upright habit makes it a good neighbor to mounded perennials like geraniums or catmint. Or consider Autumn Fire. Similar to Autumn Joy in growth habit, its flowers are bright pink before turning to salmon and then russet.

To add soft color, try Rosy Glow. It has blue-green leaves on deep pink stems. The foliage contrasts stunningly with blue-toned grasses like blue oat grass or blue fescue – or try it near purple coneflowers.



Using burgundy tones is a great way to create contrast and richness in the border. Purple Emperor grows 16 inches tall with dark purple foliage. Red flowers appear in late August to September.

Perfect for the front of a border or a sunny rock garden, Bertram Anderson has purple foliage overlaid with dusty blue. It boasts rose pink flowers in August and September.

Try either of these near plants with gray or silver foliage or Russian sage.

Sedums ask for little, but give lots. Whichever variety you choose, you will be glad you made room in your garden for sedum.



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