



Some like it hot



Plants that have a proven track record against extreme weather conditions are the secret to a low maintenance, trouble-free summer garden. Here's my list of favourite plants that can stare summer squarely in the face and not batter an eyelid.

Frangipani

One of the most loved of all summer flowering trees is the frangipani (*Plumeria* sp.) With its alluring perfume and tropical-style foliage, the frangipani grows to a height of 4 metres and brings a touch of the tropical island resort to any backyard. Flowering throughout summer and unperturbed by the heat, frangipanis come in an assortment of colours and the further north you live, the greater the colour range and variety there is to choose from. These handsome trees, when covered in their clusters of white, yellow, pink or bicoloured flowers, create welcome shade and are safe to plant relatively close to the home or entertainment area. Good drainage is essential as *Plumeria* detest wet

conditions. Frangipani rust is new to home gardens, so remove any fallen leaves around the base of the plant and bin them to help prevent this problem. Prevention is better than cure, so a monthly application (from January onwards) of either



Frangipani (*Plumeria*)

Searles Copper Oxylchloride or **Searles Mancozeb Plus** on the undersides of foliage can help reduce the outbreak of this fungal disease.

Portulaca

The gorgeous *Portulaca* is now sold under several names such as 'Sun Jewels', 'Hot shots' or 'Hot spots'. Small and demure they may be, but they certainly pack a punch when it comes to colour. Lining the stage around February onward, the iridescent, 20 cent piece-sized blooms of magenta, hot pink, raspberry, burnt orange or gold become beacons of colour in hanging baskets or along garden edges or rock walls. *Portulacas* are succulent plants which makes them tough performers in rugged, hot and dry conditions, yet they are pretty enough to bring grace to even the softest of cottage gardens. *Portulacas* are among the most water wise flowering plants available to home gardeners.

Canna

The tough, dependable *Canna* (*Canna* sp.) is famous for its lush, tropical-style foliage and flowers in explosive hues of red, orange, yellow and hot pink. They are now available in more delicate shades of cream, lemon and other soft pastels as well as bicoloured forms. *Cannas* stand up to the extremities, including heat and waterlogging and bring a festive atmosphere to the garden. They actually prefer slightly heavier soils with

good moisture retention, but with the addition of wetting agents such as **Searles Penetrator Re-Wetting Granules** and a good organic plant food such as **Searles 5IN1 Plus**, they can grow beautifully in just about any garden.

Red Hot Poker

The *Kniphofia* or **red hot poker** has been winning hearts in cooler climes and southern states for a long time and is a great choice for late summer colour. These clump-forming perennials are often found in the 'ornamental grasses' section of nurseries, although they are actually a member of the lily family and originate from South Africa. **Red hot poker** is best placed towards the back of garden beds where its one metre tall spikes will emerge like shining candles in shades of red, burnt orange, lemon and sometimes lime green. These

NOTE: If grasshoppers or caterpillars become a problem, use Searles Bug Beater to minimise damage to plants.



Red hot poker (*Kniphofia*)



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portulaca

stately blooms will also attract nectar feeding birds to your garden.

Flowering aloes

An excellent alternative to *Kniphofia* in warmer zones are the **flowering aloes**. The new 'Aloe-aloee' flowering aloes come in a wide selection of sizes and flower colours and are very similar to *Kniphofia* in appearance. These new flowering aloes are not to be mistaken for cacti or the old fashioned wild *Aloe vera* that grows at the bottom of the garden. These new forms have been bred for their flowering ability that begins in summer and can continue until late spring in some cultivars. Impervious to the heat and cold, these striking plants are highly attractive to bird life and their eye-catching, architectural foliage can make a bold statement in a variety of different garden styles.



Flowering aloe



'Seatrix'

'unfamed variety'

'Tropicana'

'Frau Garsenburg'

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