

# Felder Rushing

I can't even pronounce semiquicentennial but my garden is already sporting a patriotic color triad theme, well before our country's upcoming 250th anniversary hoopla. I'm planting red, white, and blue flowers in pots and flowerbeds and adding accessories to kick off and keep the party going.

The challenge has been in finding durable plants that hold up all summer. Some of the easiest flowers in garden centers only bloom for a few weeks, even with dead-heading to keep more flowers coming along, so I concentrate on the heat-tolerant mainstays that flower pretty much non-stop and grow well without coddling.

It is possible to pull it off with a combination of annuals and perennials, and even various shrubs including compact, everblooming red or white roses, tree-like Vitex, and hybrid rose of Sharon (althaea, which comes in all three colors), especially if accented with color-coordinated hard features, ribbons, and a flag.

And of course, a lot of flowers I can recommend

may not be widely available at any given garden center. But after visited both locally owned garden centers and big box stores, I came away with enough to get me started - again, eschewing those that flower just for a short time or are fickle in our summer climate.

Here are a few long-blooming, heat-tolerant mainstays you may come across in Mississippi garden centers:

**Red:** Cockscomb and prince's feather Celosia, geranium, compact roses, shade-loving annual salvia and impatiens, hybrid periwinkle, spikey summer snapdragon (Angelonia), super heat tolerant Texas sage salvia (Hot Lips is both red and white), ornamental peppers, pentas, hybrid zinnias, and compact roses.

**White:** Periwinkle (some which have red throats), pentas, Angelonia, pale gray dusty miller (a durable year-round mainstay all over my garden), impatiens, white fan flower (Scaevola), salvia, hybrid zinnias, Gaura, and compact roses.

**Blue:** Fan flower, Angelonia, stunning perennial salvias with long spikes of



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POT O' PATRIOTISM

blue florets, Ageratum, and blue daze (Evolvulus). By the way, it's hard to find true blue for Mississippi because of the angle of the sun makes blues appear washed out, compared with the same flowers in northern climates.

Besides flowers, the color of a pot itself can make a bold splash, so I started with a low, wide, true-blue ceramic pot, which immediately set the theme. Af-

ter stuffing it with flowers, keeping in mind the easy design trick of mixing shapes (something round, spikey, frilly, and cascading), I topped it off with some non-plant accessories to pump up the flower colors and ensuring that the RW&B theme will stay vibrant all the way to fall.

To add height, I stuck in some small crape myrtle branches spray-painted blue and topped with little cobalt



NON-PLANT ACCENTS ROCK!

blue glass bottles. I thought about painting small rocks in the needed colors but found an old ceramic gnome in a corner of my garden who had blue coat and pointy red hat.

While making a quick run to a local hobby shop for little flags I waded through an embarrassment of exceptionally cute patriotic-themed figurines, red mushrooms with white spots, cut-out stars, whirling pinwheels, tinsel, and other swag. And pardon my sense of whimsy, I found a cute spray of faux flowers that is

so realistic it fools visitors to my garden from a few feet away.

Maybe I've gotten a bit theatrical, but going all out with our in-your-face national colors is helping ground this proudly patriotic old veteran, a simple way to manage the polarized thoughts and emotions swirling around the country.

My cheery tabletop pot of RW&B flowers and accessories is already turning my garden look like July 4th floral fireworks - without scaring the dog.

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