

Black-eyed Susan - Rudbeckia

Thrifty farmers may decry the importation into their mowing lots, but there is a glory to the cone-flower beside which the glitter of a gold coin fades into paltry nothingness. – Mrs. Neltje Blanchan, 1900

What's in a name:

Rudbeckia hirta (hirta > hairy)
Black-eyed daisy; Poor land daisy; Golden Jerusalem; Black Sampson; Snakeroot

All in the family: Aster Family
22 species *Rudbeckia* in US

Common name in Mexico:

Dormilon

Suzy, you've got some 'splaining to do: Daisy-like flowers with yellow rays around a dark brown, conical, central disk make this lovely flower a favorite in the wildflower garden. The ray flowers provide a landing platform for nectar feeders.

My name is Sue, how do you do? Now you're gonna dye: Native peoples boiled the disk florets to obtain a yellow dye for cloth and textiles.



Drawing by Pierre-Joseph Redouté (from wikipedia.org)

Oh, puh-leese! Some garden books call it invasive. Evidently, some people have a little too much beauty in their lives...

Caterpillar Café:

Silvery Checkerspot;
Camouflaged Looper;
Cabbage Moth; Dot Moth

Uppsala-Daisy: The genus *Rudbeckia* was named in honor of Professor Olaf Rudbeck. He prepared a treatise on plants of the Bible and was the teacher of the famous botanist Linnaeus. Linnaeus later succeeded him as Professor of Medicine in 1741 and Professor of Botany in 1742 at the University of Uppsala in Sweden.



photo by Barbara Powers; MLMP.org

It is born-in-the-USA, and it is named in your honor: On July 29, 1731, Linnaeus wrote to Rudbeck to inform him he was naming an American plant in his honor. According to Linnaeus, "So long as the earth shall survive, each spring shall see it covered with flowers, the *Rudbeckia* will preserve your glorious name."

Today we might call that buttering up the boss, but in the 18th century, before the days of publicly-supported higher education, scholars had to find a patron to support their work!

1988 NC Wildflower of the Year
State flower of Maryland

Oh, sho-shana, I long to see you: The word *Suzhan* in the New Testament may be from the Hebrew word – *shoshana* that is mentioned in the Old Testament's Song of Songs 2:1 as "lily of the valley."

Earth cannot escape heaven,
flee it by going up, or flee it by
going down, heaven still invades
the earth, energizes it,
makes it sacred.
All hiding places reveal God.
If you want to escape God,
s/he rushes into your lap.
For God is at home.
It is we who
have gone out for a walk.
~ Meister Eckhart

Desperately Seeking Susans: Foliage is grazed by domestic stock for forage. An abundance of these plants on a rangeland usually indicates a healthy pasture.

In your best James Taylor voice... Just yesterday morning... Suzanne, the plans they made made a star of you: The USDA NRCS Plant Materials Program issued a plant fact sheet for *Rudbeckia* touting its usefulness in erosion control along road cuts, hillsides and other erosion-prone areas. It is easily established and generally has no major insect or disease pests. It offers protection and food to song and game birds.

'Golden Jubilee' is the cultivar used in conservation in the northeast as it does well on droughty soils and is also winter hardy in areas at 30 ° F. There are an estimated 1.7 million seeds per pound. What a plant!