



A name you trust.

FIND A STORE



Home | Login | Manage Account

Subscribe | Contact Us

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Friday, April 23, 2010 | Last Update: 10:51am

Today	Saturday	
52°		
High: 59° Low: 43°	High: 60° Low: 36°	

Click for 7 day forecast

Classifieds | Real Estate | Jobs | Autos | Coupons | Special Sections | Business Directory

Search our site

- News
- Business
- Sports
- Outdoors
- Lifestyle
- Opinion
- Obituaries
- Things to do
- Contact Us
- Album
- Archive

SHARE

JANINE PINEO

Despite its Spanish nickname, Zinnias are easy on the eyes



A dahlia-flowered zinnia provides a burst of color in the late summer garden. Zinnias are easily grown from direct seeding.

3/27/10

By [Janine Pineo](#)
BDN Staff

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then one couldn't fault oneself for proceeding with caution when a flower is called "mal de ojos."

That's Spanish for the much less poetic "sickness of the eye," a rather cringe-worthy description.

The eye of one beholder was Johann Gottfried Zinn, a German botanist and anatomist for whom the bloom is named. It was he who wrote the first detailed description of the humble, maligned zinnia in the 1750s.

Zinn, oddly enough, is better known for his book on the anatomy of the eye.

What vision those original zinnias, found down Mexico way, resembled is hard to say. Ugly seems to be the most common adjective.

According to "100 Flowers and How They Got Their Names" by Diana Wells, the same fellow who sent cosmos back to Europe, professor Casimir Gomez de Ortega, sent zinnias along, too, although it would take a couple centuries before anyone decided to take an interest in the less-than-spectacular specimen.

Then breeders started monkeying with the pollination and began the march toward a more pleasing posy.

By the 1920s, the dahlia-flowered zinnia made its appearance, according to the National Garden Bureau. In the 1950s, one seed company introduced 'State Fair,' a variety readily available today, while 'Persian Carpet,' a dwarf selection also still popular, won the All-America Selections award in 1952.

According to "100 Flowers," most of today's hybrid zinnias stem from a single plant discovered in a W. Atlee Burpee field of "experimental zinnias." Known as "Old 66," this particular plant was found in the 66th row.

0% APR FORD CREDIT FINANCING FOR 60 MOS. OR \$3,000 CASH BACK*

Focus, with up to 35 mpg. Now I only hit the gas station for beef jerky.*

Your Local Ford Store

CLICK TO FIND A DEALER

SEARCH INVENTORY

CLICK TO GET OFFER

Roll over for more info

TWO WEEKS OF FREE HOME DELIVERY

[click here for more information](#)

- TOP STORIES
- MOST READ
- BDN STORE
- COMMENTS

Down East pastor, wife arrested on kidnapping charges

Boy charged in attack on mother

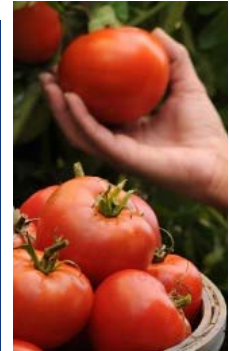
Wal-Mart shopper charged with theft

Carmel heart attack victim found dead at fire station

Homeowner tears out deck to avoid fines

Washburn man sentenced in sex abuse case

Anziani pleads not guilty in Bangor baby's death



TRUGREEN
Go greener.™

GET YOUR FIRST CUSTOM LAWN CARE TREATMENT FOR JUST \$29.95

SIGN UP TODAY

www.trugreen.com

Arts by Google

The NGB writes that the breeder, John Mondry, found it possessed only female reproductive parts and needed to be cross-pollinated to produce seeds, which led to the start of the F1 hybrids such as the 'Peter Pan' series and the 'Ruffles' series, both from the 1970s.

Even more would be bred in the 1990s, including 'Crystal White' and the 'Profusion' series, which is the first to cross two species, Zinnia angustifolia and Z. elegans.

Ironic isn't it, that a genus seemingly so old-fashioned is actually cutting edge?

I didn't realize that until I started reading about zinnias. I've long planted at least three or so varieties each summer, tucked here and there in the vegetable garden for a striking burst of color and to attract more pollinators to the subtler vegetable blossoms. Zinnia seeds are an inexpensive way to add a lot to the garden without spending much.

In the late spring, I always plant a packet of 'Persian Carpet' for its earthy colors. This zinnia, Z. haageana, is commonly called Mexican zinnia and tends to stay short, not much more than 16 to 18 inches tall in my garden. I love that the plants are profuse bloomers in the late summer, rivaling the sunflowers in their colors, just on a much smaller scale.

Most every year I sow a section of Z. elegans 'State Fair' as well. This dahlia-flowered variety with its mix of single and double blooms is full of brilliant colors: reds, oranges, pinks, yellows and purples. The colors are so rich that they tend to look fake, for how could a plant produce so many amazing hues?

'State Fair' usually tops out at 4 feet in August from a late spring sowing. Like all zinnias, it makes excellent cut flowers that last several days.

Even more delightful is the fact that cutting a zinnia prompts the plant to send up two more flower buds. It's a nice equation: pick a flower, two more grow.

Last year I tried a mix of Benary's Giant and was rewarded with flowers even more impressive than 'State Fair.' The colors and height were the same, but the blooms were massive, thickly petaled and so perfectly formed that they looked artificial.

A more relaxed-looking zinnia is the cactus-flowered variety. Also a form of Z. elegans, the cactus-flowered zinnia sports petals with edges that roll under while the whole petal bends, offering a mussed look. The colors and the height tend to mimic those of 'State Fair,' making it a nice counterpoint to the stiffer-looking dahlia-flowered varieties. I missed not planting a row of these last year.

There are dozens more varieties from which to choose, but if you are looking for the latest, hottest ones, consider the Zahara series. Three of these zinnias won All-America Selections honors for bedding plants this year. Ranging from 12 to 14 inches tall and wide, 'Double Zahara Cherry' and 'Double Zahara Fire' are fully double, producing deep cherry and fiery red blooms, respectively. 'Zahara Rose Starlight' is a single variety of bicolor flowers in rose and white.

Simply put, zinnias are easy on the eyes and the wallet.

How does one say that in Spanish?

Related Links

[Janine Pineo](#)

[Post a Comment](#)
Not registered? Click here

 E-mail this

 Print this

Guidelines for posting on bangordailynews.com

Bangordailynews.com is pleased to offer a forum for readers to react to our stories, discuss them and provide additional information. We are reluctant to delete comments, but do reserve that right for those who abuse our forum. For more on using this site, please see our [terms of service](#).

The primary rule here is pretty simple: Treat others with the same respect you'd want for yourself. What does that mean specifically? Here are some guidelines ([see more](#)):

Post a comment about this story

You must be logged in to post a comment. [click here to log in.](#)

Bangor Daily News

- [Archives](#)
- [News](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Outdoors](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [TV Listings](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Things to Do](#)
- [Album](#)
- [Special Sections](#)
- [Reporter Queries](#)
- [Coupons](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Storm Cancellations](#)

About Us

- [BDN History](#)
- [BDN 120 Years](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [BDN Store](#)
- [Purchase Photos](#)
- [Maineville](#)
- [Help/FAQ](#)
- [Terms of Service](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)

Subscribe

- [Bangor Daily News Subscriptions](#)
- [Manage Your Subscription](#)

Advertising

- [Classifieds](#)
- [Retail Advertising](#)
- [Online Advertising](#)
- [The Weekly](#)
- [The Midcoast Beacon](#)
- [National & Special Sections](#)
- [Niche Publications](#)
- [Audience and Reach](#)
- [Market Info](#)
- [Advertising Staff Directory](#)

On the Web

Visit the BDN on Facebook



Maineville on Facebook
Follow Bangor Daily News on Twitter
Bangor Daily News on YouTube