



Gaillardia: Indian Blanket / Blanket Flower

There are many stories about how the name Blanket Flower came to be. According to the Aztecs, beautiful yellow flowers that grew throughout their homeland were spattered with blood when Cortez conquered the nation. One Native American story tells of the lost daughter of a war chief who prayed for a blanket to cover her through the night. When she awoke, she was covered in orange and red flowers so bright that her father was able to find her. Another tells of a great Comanche blanket weaver who had no family and no apprentice. Before he died, he wove himself the most beautiful red and gold burial blanket as a gift to the Great Spirit. The Great Spirit was pleased with the gift but understood that the people would never again have the chance to enjoy the old man's wonderful works after his death. The following spring the old man's grave was covered in beautiful flowers in those same colors, which spread across the land.



Indian Blanket, or Blanket Flower, became Oklahoma's Official State Wildflower in May of 1986. It is a terrific addition to your pollinator garden that will attract butterflies and bees. It is also an excellent choice for xeriscaping. Blanket Flowers are native to the central U.S. from Colorado and Nebraska to New Mexico and Texas. In Oklahoma, they are primarily found in the western two-thirds of the state in fields and pastures and along highways. There are many varieties of Blanket Flower available for the home garden. *Gaillardia x grandiflora* is the type most commonly grown. They are in the genus Gaillard, which was named after French naturalist Antoine Rene Gaillard de Charentoneau.



The Blanket Flower is a heat-loving plant that needs full sun and well-drained soil. It is very tolerant of our temperature extremes and does not need fertilizing. In fact, fertilizing will make them leggy, weak, and unable to support their blooms. Once established Gaillardia is pretty drought tolerant so be careful not to overwater, which can cause powdery mildew.

Blanket flowers are easy to grow. Scatter seeds over moist, lightly raked soil. Do not cover them, as they need light to germinate. Seeds usually germinate in 2-3 weeks. Ready-to-plant starts need to be planted about one foot apart. Blanket flowers do not require deadheading to keep blooming. It re-seeds readily – just allow the seed heads to dry on the plant for maximum reseeding for the following summer. They can get up to 24-36" tall and 12-24" wide and bloom from May through August. Add this storied, beautiful native flower to your garden. It is an earth-kind way to salute our great state!



Sources:

OSU Extension Fact Sheet
OSU Extension Fact Sheet
Oklahoma Historical Society
Missouri Botanical Garden
University of Wisconsin
North Carolina Extension

“Indian Blanket”
“Blanket Flower”
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“Gaillardia x grandiflora”
“Blanket flower, Gaillardia spp.”
“Gaillardia”