



Real Tough Flowers

by
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During most summers, frost hits the garden anywhere from the last week of August to the end of September. We certainly talk enough about the weather, even brag about the seasonal extremes. We like those extremes in the garden because it allows us to test which plants are the toughest of all. We have our list of records – the biggest, tallest, hardiest. This list doesn't excite the Guinness folks, but it certainly provides a bit of information for those of us who absolutely must have a bit of color in the garden until the very end of the season when the snow flies.

This past season was one of those test seasons. Normally a frost consists of a two to three degree drop in temperature below freezing. We wait several days, then assess the damage. This year temperatures didn't dip below freezing, they took a nose-dive! Frost brought the growing season to an abrupt end in mid September with a low of 23.1°F (-5.0°C), a nine degree (F) drop below freezing! As usual, the pansies and violas topped the list of survivors followed by snapdragons and verbenas. However, it is not true that all pansies and violas are super hardy. At the bottom of the list are cultivars that took a hit despite their tough reputation.

Table 1. Flowers that kept blooming following a severe freeze, 13 Sept 2003.

Name	Cultivar
Agastache	Golden Jubilee
Sweet Alyssum	Snow Crystals, Wonderland Lavender
Calendula	Flaskback, Geisha Girl
Chrysanthemum	Snowland
English Daisy	Lipstick
Gazania	Daybreak Orange Cream, Sunshine
Geranium	Black Velvet Rose, Maverick Violet
Godetia	Flamingo Mix
Linaria	Fantasy Mix
Lupine	Band of Nobles
Pansy	Baby Bingo Denim, Bingo Clar White, Brunig, Copperfield, Ice Cream Mix, Imperial Antique Shades, Luna, Majestic Patricia, Pandora's Box, Sorrento Sunset
Petunia	Blue Wave, Double Cascade Mix, Tidal Wave Purple
Rudbeckia	Cherokee Sunset
Salvia	Marble Arch
Snapdragon	Frosted Sunset, Liberty, Lilac Time, Rocket Yellow, Solstice Hybrid, Sonnet White Improved
Statice	Pastel Shades
Stock	Giant Imperial Mix
Strawflower	Perfect Jewel Mix
Three birds flying	
Tidy tips (Layia)	
Verbena	Crystal Ball Mix, Quartz Mix Waterfall, Quartz Scarlet, Quartz White, Perfecta
Viola	Jewel Yellow, Penny Porcelain, Penny Violet, Sorbet Orange Delight, Sorbet Orange Duet

Pansies and Violas that showed damage to severe frost

Pansies Atlas Windjammer, Bronze Tones, Coronation Gold, Fama Orange, Light Strawberry Sundae, North Pole
Violas Jewel Yellow, Lemon Swirl, Sorbet Coconut Swirl

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