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Contributed by Jant Mackey

NOW is a GOOD TIME to SOW SEEDS of BIENNIALS



Sweet Williams (*Dianthus barbatus*)
flowering in May

Sweet Williams flower beautifully in late spring and early summer between early spring flowers and the bounty of summer. It is a shame they aren't grown more widely.

Foxgloves and Hollyhocks are a couple of others that are missing from too many gardens because they are hard to find in garden centers. Why? Because they are biennials. The first year they grow only leaves. In their second year they send up shoots and flower, flower, flower! Nurseries and garden centers generally don't want to keep a plant around for an extra year before it shows off for their gardener customers. So, if you want these treasures in your garden, you should start them from seed.

sow them in seed pots rather than straight into a garden bed. That way I can keep an eye on their progress and keep them watered. Also, their seeds and sprouts are less likely to be eaten by birds or other critters.

You can plant out the seedlings as soon as they have a few sets of leaves. They will form a rosette of leaves and grow nice roots through the fall before they go dormant. In the spring, they will pop up and reward you with their marvelous flowers. If you get them started by mid-summer, they will "count" this summer as Year 1 and you likely will have flowers next spring.

Now is the time to start biennials from seed. I generally



Foxgloves (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Give it a try. There's nothing to lose but the cost of a pack of seeds.