

LOOK AGAIN !

I used to love my garden,
But now my love is dead;
I found a Bachelor's Button
In my Black-eyed Susan's bed.

--Unknown

Nurtured in a flower garden or rampant in a summer meadow, Black-eyed Susan certainly is one of our favorites. We think of it as a native, although actually it is an introduced species here, having hitched a ride with other seeds from the West. And, as with any old friend, we recognize it on sight. Or do we?

The most familiar species is Rudbeckia hirta (R. serotina of some authors), and most of the time our identification will be right, but there are other attractive "coneflowers" which we might miss getting to know if we are too sure of ourselves.

The very similar R. fulgida is known as Orange Coneflower because the yellow ray flowers are often tinged with that color at the base; it is more common in the piedmont, less so in the mountains. Then there is the Thin-leaved Coneflower (R. triloba), which at a distance may look like a slightly smaller Black-eyed Susan. Its rays are proportionately wider and a deeper shade of yellow. Most distinctive, though, is the fact that some of the lower leaves have a pair of basal lobes, and this sets it apart from the others.



R. HIRTA



R. TRILOBA

No discussion of the genus should omit mention of the tall, handsome Green-headed Coneflower (R. laciniata), although there is no mistaking it because of its disk, which is yellowish-green instead of brown, its drooping rays, and its pinnately-cut foliage.

Dick Smith