

## Spring Barrow Bouquet

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Happy Spring Day! Our flamboyant Barrow Bouquet is designed to enthuse and invigorate gardeners for the season ahead.

As spring shrugs off the brown palette of winter, it brings fresh new growth, bright colours and energy for the growing season ahead. We scoured the nurseries for delicious colour and variety to plant up a tableau that would inspire. So, tossing out the rulebook, pink and yellow meets russet and red, and sit side by side with blue, lilac, purple and white. Squeezed into an old and rusted wheelbarrow, flowers and foliage weave together, spilling cheerfully over the edge – an indigenous option to the common pots of Petunias and Violas used worldwide.

### Ingredients:

Any large container can be used – as large as possible to fit a diverse mix. The old wheelbarrow provided generous space, rusty enough to ensure excellent drainage - a sheet of shade cloth (you could use weed guard) covers holes to prevent soil loss. Spread a mix of compost and potting soil over the base, sprinkle a couple of handfuls of organic fertiliser, and you are ready to design. To add dimension to the container, create a raised centrepiece by packing the potting mix into a low mound graduating gently to the edges of the barrow.

We have combined tall and upright with compact and trailing; bulbs and perennials with annuals, succulents and groundcovers. Some, like the *Watsonia* bulb, adds a short burst of peach bugle-shaped blooms but perennials and groundcovers should flower freely for an entire season. The success of a container display comes down to maintenance. Containers are closed systems that restrict roots from searching out moisture and nutrients, so these plants need feeding and watering more often than ground based plants, especially during the heat of summer. Giving weak solutions of liquid fertiliser more often gives great results. Light trimming keeps container plants bushy and vigorous, especially the spreading groundcovers. Keep pinching out the tips, so they develop dense centres and regularly trim to prevent that unsightly woodiness in the centre that eventually kills off a plant. Regular deadheading keeps your floral art looking good for as long as possible and extends the show with a fresh batch of flowers. As this display is planted so densely, it will need frequent nourishment.

We've chosen the round blue heads of the Dwarf Agapanthus, *Agapanthus africanus*, placed at the top of the mound, to add height and impact. Keeping them company are peach bells of *Watsonia pillansii*, yellow columns of *Kniphofia pauciflora* and loose heads of pale mauve *Tulbaghia*, glowing in the bright light. The *Watsonia* flowers will soon fade, but its companions will keep the show going with their long flowering seasons. Although *Kniphofia pauciflora* is critically endangered, with one last remaining wild population of 18 fighting for

survival in Durban, many nurseries propagate it. A delight in the front of a garden bed, the Dainty Poker prefers marshy grassland but is happy enough in an ordinary garden bed if watered regularly. Clumps flower from September to February. An iridescent red/pink *Pelargonium peltatum* draws the eye, succulent ivy-like leaves an attractive contrast in texture and form to the strappy leaves of the taller species. The Ivy Pelargonium should flower through to January. A grey and silver variegated *Tulbaghia violacea* tuck in behind a neat, white flowering *Osteospermum* hybrid and frothy stems of the yellow *Cineraria saxifraga*. Don't worry about the sprawling growth habit of the Wild Cineraria; it is easy to trim and adds bright yellow daisies right through spring and summer.

Grey leaves of *Kleinia fulgens* contrast with the dark greens of the annual *Gazania krebsiana* varieties. Usually flowering through winter, the coral balls of this vibrant succulent are still on show – I love combining the hot colours in shades of orange, yellow and red.

Hybrid *Osteospermums* in purple, white and russet plump out the lower level; snipping flowers off as they fade will keep them blooming for months. And if you're looking to add blue, there is no better choice than the Kingfisher Daisy, *Felicia amelloides*. A light trim should keep this groundcover compact and in flower through to March.

Position this posy just outside the front door to provide a joyful lift to each new day. This florists' bouquet provides riotous colour for months.