



'Fuzzy Navel'



Prairie smoke



Water geum



Herb bennet

**KEY**

- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★ Good
- ★★ Fair
- ★ Poor

*Rated on ornamental qualities, cultural adaptability, and pest resistance*

**Bloom period:**

^Repeats periodically throughout summer and often into fall

**Flower size (diameter):**

LARGE (1¾ to 2 inches)

MEDIUM (1 to 1½ inches)

SMALL (½ inch or less)

**Plant height:**

Inclusive of flowers



'Werner Arends'

## A geum primer

### Their blooms look like roses for a reason

It's not surprising that geum blossoms sometimes remind people of miniature roses because they belong to the same family. The five-petaled flowers, often with a central cluster of golden stamens, may be upward facing to nodding. The most notable of the nodding flowers are seen with water geum (*G. rivale*) and prairie smoke (*G. triflorum*), which hide their understated petals within colorful, cup-shaped bracts. The flowers are held on wiry, leafy stems above the foliage. The more traditional geum flowers may be single, semi-double, or double in hues of orange, yellow, or red. While hot hues are typical, a number of new cultivars come in softer shades of these core colors (sidebar, p. 51).

### The foliage is almost as cool as the blooms

Geums form rosettes of bold, hairy green leaves. Many cultivars are hybrids, so there is no cookie-cutter uniformity to the highly variable foliage. Mounds of foliage range from 6 inches to a foot or so tall without flowers. 'Eos', named for the goddess of the dawn, is a golden-leaved cultivar grown primarily for its unique foliage.

For us, 'Eos' had deep yellow leaves in spring, but they quickly turned yellow-green and then often bronzed or burnt by midsummer. 'Eos' was also shy to flower, producing about three flowers per year. I still have hope, though, that if 'Eos' had been grown in afternoon shade, we would have been able to appreciate fully its luminous character.



'Eos'

### Keeping them happy and healthy is fairly easy

There are about 50 species of geums indigenous to Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, although only a handful of species are

### Geum trial results

RATING	NAME	FLOWER COLOR	BLOOM PERIOD
★★★	<i>Geum</i> 'Alabama Slammer'	Orange	Midspring to early summer
★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Beech House Apricot'	Soft yellow and apricot	Early spring to early summer
★	<i>G.</i> 'Blazing Sunset'	Scarlet	Midsummer to early fall
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Borisii'	Dark orange	Early spring to early summer^
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Cherry Cordial'	Orangey red	Midspring to midsummer
★★★	<i>G. coccineum</i> 'Cooky'	Bright orange	Early spring to early summer^
★	<i>G. coccineum</i> 'Eos'	Dark orange	Early spring to early summer
★★	<i>G. coccineum</i> 'Werner Arends'	Dark orange	Early spring to early summer^
★★	<i>G.</i> 'Coppertone'	Apricot	Midspring to early summer
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Dolly North'	Orange	Midspring to midsummer^
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Flames of Passion'	Red	Early spring to early summer
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Freuerball' ('Fireball')	Yellow-orange	Midspring to early summer
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Fuzzy Navel'	Bright yellow	Midspring to early summer
★★	<i>G.</i> 'Georgenberg'	Orange-yellow	Early spring to early summer^
★★★★	<i>G. × intermedium</i> 'Diane'	Golden yellow	Early spring to early summer^
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Mai Tai'	Apricot	Early spring to early summer
★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Mango Lassi'	Yellow and apricot	Early spring to early summer
★★	<i>G.</i> 'Mrs. Bradshaw'	Red	Early summer to midsummer
★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Rijnstroom'	Orange	Midspring to early summer
★★★	<i>G. rivale</i>	Orangey pink, purple	Midspring to midsummer
★★★	<i>G. rivale</i> 'Album'	Creamy white, green	Early spring to midsummer^
★★★	<i>G. rivale</i> 'Leonard's Variety'	Apricot, purple	Midspring to early summer
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Sangria'	Scarlet	Early summer to midsummer^
★★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Starkers Magnificum'	Orange	Late spring to midsummer
★★★	<i>G.</i> 'Tequila Sunrise'	Soft yellow, red tips	Early spring to early summer
★★★★	<i>G. triflorum</i>	White, rosy pink	Early spring to midsummer
★★★	<i>G. urbanum</i>	Yellow	Midspring to early summer

Photos, except where noted: Danielle Sherry; p. 51 (second from bottom right and bottom right), courtesy of Brent Horvath

commonly cultivated. Geums generally prefer moist, well-drained soils in light shade to full sun but do not like wet winter soils. They flourish in full-sun gardens in cool zones if ample water is provided but will appreciate afternoon shade in warmer climates. Leaf scorch and spider mites are not uncommon under hot, dry growing conditions. Water geum, as the name implies, likes a lot of moisture and is adaptable to boggy sites but was also completely happy in the drier conditions of our test garden.

**They live longer than once thought**

For those who do know a little something about geums, it seems to be generally accepted that they are short-lived plants that require frequent division to keep plants healthy and vigorous. Based on our trial, Chilean geum (*G. chilense*) and scarlet geum (*G. coccineum*) suffer winter dieback and are short-lived species under the best of conditions (we never got them to overwinter). Their hybrid cultivars ('Blazing Sunset', 'Mrs. Bradshaw', and 'Georgenberg') are similarly short-lived. We observed this phenomenon most acutely with 'Blazing Sunset',

which we planted three times but never got to overwinter. Not all geums, however, are as short-lived or as fussy as reputed. Many of the cultivars and species in our trial grew vigorously for at least four years—sometimes under less-than-ideal conditions, such as hot afternoon sun—and none of them was ever divided.

**One occasional chore is critical**

Beyond receiving sufficient soil moisture, geums need to be dead-headed. Deadheading encourages flower production into late summer, improves the bedraggled appearance of the plants after flowering, and reduces the potential for reseeding. Geums reseed freely—herb bennet (*G. urbanum*) was almost weedlike in our trial—and hybridize readily. The cool thing is that sometimes the seedlings have surprising flower colors and forms.



Winter dieback

	FLOWER COVERAGE	FLOWER FORM	FLOWER SIZE	HEIGHT	WIDTH
	Good	Semi-double	Medium	14 inches	21 inches
	Good	Single	Medium	16 inches	20 inches
	Poor	Double	Large	24 inches	27 inches
	Excellent	Single	Medium	18 inches	24 inches
	Excellent	Single	Medium	18 inches	17 inches
	Good	Single	Medium	21 inches	22 inches
	Poor	Single	Medium	6 inches	16 inches
	Fair	Semi-double	Medium	14 inches	21 inches
	Fair	Double	Medium	18 inches	22 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Medium	26 inches	26 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Medium	21 inches	21 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Large	24 inches	24 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Medium	24 inches	32 inches
	Fair	Single	Medium	16 inches	16 inches
	Excellent	Single	Large	24 inches	24 inches
	Excellent	Single	Medium	24 inches	24 inches
	Good	Semi-double	Medium	16 inches	21 inches
	Poor	Semi-double	Large	21 inches	24 inches
	Good	Semi-double	Large	26 inches	34 inches
	Excellent	Single	Small	28 inches	28 inches
	Excellent	Single	Small	25 inches	32 inches
	Excellent	Single	Small	30 inches	30 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Large	32 inches	30 inches
	Excellent	Semi-double	Large	28 inches	32 inches
	Good	Semi-double	Medium	12 inches	14 inches
	Excellent	Single	Medium	16 inches	30 inches
	Excellent	Single	Medium	28 inches	32 inches

**HOW THEY WERE EVALUATED**

Because growing geums was new to me, it was necessary to evaluate the plants with an especially keen and critical eye. While we still compared the ornamental attributes of the various geums (a sampling of which are represented in this chart), it was equally important to gauge their adaptability to the cultural conditions of the test garden, record any disease and pest problems, and note winter-hardiness issues. We grew the geums for five years in our full-sun beds (Zone 5), which have a well-drained, alkaline, clay-loam soil. The plants got minimal care, thereby allowing them to thrive or fail under natural conditions.

