**Rudbeckia fulgida** - Orange Coneflower or Black-Eyed Susan (Asteraceae)

*Rudbeckia fulgida* is a perennial primarily known through its extremely popular cultivar 'Goldsturm' that is noted for its magnificent mid- to late-summer yellow-orange-petaled, black-centered flowers that rise above the dark green basal foliage. Orange Coneflower is commonly seen as a specimen in beds, in mass embankment or roadside plantings, or naturalized in neglected urban areas.

**FEATURES**

**Form**
- small- to medium-sized herbaceous perennial
- species form matures at 3' tall x 3' wide, but cultivars are smaller
- upright clump growth habit

**Culture**
- full sun to partial shade
- performs best in full sun in moist, well-drained soils, but is very adaptable to dry soils, compacted soils, thin soils, drought, and soils of various pH
- propagated primarily by clump division in very early spring, but also prolific in its self-sowing nature by seeds, forming wide-spreading crowns after 3 or more yrs. of establishment and reseeding
- Daisy Family, with leaf spot being the only minor cosmetic disease of significance
- abundantly available in container form
- prune dead stems back to the ground every late winter to allow new growth to emerge unimpeded; however, if self-sowing is to be curtailed, the stems must be sheared back and discarded in mid-autumn before the seed heads mature

**Foliage**
- alternate, dark green, ovate, and sparsely dentate, with the lower leaves originating from the crown having petioles, but the upper leaves sessile on the flowering stems
- leaves emerge pubescent but become rough to the touch by summer, but are not nearly as pubescent or hirsute as the species *Rudbeckia hirta*, the annual "Black-Eyed Susan"
- basal foliage may be semi-evergreen in mild winters, but is not ornamentally attractive and often unnoticed

**Flowers**
- the yellow-orange ray flowers (petals) surround the black disk flowers (cone-shaped center), at the numerous terminals of the continuously branching stems
- each flower lasts about 2 weeks, with the overall bloom time for about 3-4 weeks anytime from late July to early Sept., depending on the intensity of the heat and drought of the season (drought encourages early bloom and senescence)

**Fruits**
- the yellow-orange petals slowly fade to a withered yellow-brown, which slowly abscise to reveal the black spherical fruiting heads
- the seed heads are usually left on the plant for a subtle ornamental effect in winter (but this promotes a copious amount of self-sowing in the immediate vicinity, and they can be deadheaded after bloom to prevent this potential liability)

**USAGE**

**Function**
- beds, borders, entranceways, raised planters, meadows, or any naturalized sunny areas

**Texture**
- bold texture
- thick density

**Assets**
- spectacular yellow-orange flowers with black "eyes" in mid-summer
- subtle ornamental winter effect of persistent black fruiting heads
- urban tolerant (to drought, thin soils, and neglect)
- naturalizes via self-sowing

**Liabilities**
- vigorous crown growth and a strong tendency to self-sow will severely encroach on surrounding perennials or small shrubs within 2-3 yrs. from the initial planting, unless the triple maintenance of deadheading, seedling rogueing, and crown division occur on a yearly basis

**Habitat**
- Zones 4 to 8
- Native to the U.S.

**SELECTIONS**

**Alternates**
- perennials of mid- to late-summer flowering known for their dependable performance during hot weather (*Heliopsis helianthoides*, *Hemerocallis*, *Lilium*, *Miscanthus*, *Perovskia*, *Phlox paniculata*, *Sedum* 'Herbstfreude' ['Autumn Joy'], etc.)
- perennials of yellow-orange or golden flowers (various species and cultivars of *Coreopsis*, *Gaillardia*, *Heliopsis*, *Hemerocallis*, *Lilium*, *Rudbeckia*, etc.)

**Variants**
- *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Viete's Little Suzie' - a compact variety and cultivar that soon will become a standard among perennials (perhaps even replacing 'Goldsturm' in the nursery trade), to 15" x 15", with dark green, glossy, basal leaves with raised margins that form a "cup" along the center of the leaf blade, having the traditional very showy golden-yellow flowers with black centers, but on shorter stems

*Rudbeckia fulgida var. sullivantii* 'Goldsturm' - while the species form is prevalent (along with other species of this genus) in meadows of central North America, this slightly more compact (to 2' x 2') and floriferous variety and cultivar is an extremely popular perennial in urban landscaping, having been selected in Germany (and translating as 'Gold Storm'; sometimes incorrectly labeled as 'Goldstrum')

- *Rudbeckia hirta* - Black-Eyed Susan, Oxeye Daisy, or Gloriosa Daisy - somewhat similar to the above in overall appearance, but an annual (however, it reseeds itself readily and can be considered a functional perennial under many wild or naturalizing conditions); to 3' x 2', with scabrous leaves and larger flowers, having petals of golden-yellow edges and red, mahogany, brown, or orange hues toward the center, with a brown or black "eye" of central disk flowers