

Plants for Birds:

Blanket Flower

(*Gaillardia*, Indian Blanket Flower)

- **Scientific Name:** *Gaillardia aristata* (Asteraceae Family)
- **Height:** 18-30"
- **Hardiness:** Zone 3
- **Wildlife Value:** Attracts native bees, butterflies and other pollinators, provides seeds for small birds

By Leslie Eddington

Blanket flower, *Gaillardia aristata*, is a vibrant, colorful, long-lived perennial native to most of western North America including all 56 counties of Montana. The bright, yellow/orange colors of the inflorescence are said to resemble the patterns woven into Indian blankets thus giving the plant the common name of Indian blanket flower. These showy flowers attract a wide variety of pollinators such as native bees, cryptic moths, butterflies, and other beneficial insects. In turn the rich supply of insects attracts insectivorous song birds as well as upland game birds like sage grouse and sharp-tailed grouse. Juncos, sparrows, and finches feed on the seeds when they mature.

Blanket flower is an important element of several habitat types in Western Montana. It is found in open, dry spaces of prairies and foothills, along roadsides and disturbed sites and has also been recorded in several types of riparian plant communities. It's considered a mid-succession plant and can grow in large, dense populations and is sometimes used for restoration of disturbed sites. It's a favorite in many native seed mixes as well.



In the garden, plant this species in a well drained, sunny site as it obtains optimum growth in full sun. It tends to grow 18-30 inches tall and does well in a variety of soil types from loam to gravelly/sandy. It is very hardy and is also very drought tolerant. Blanket flower can be purchased locally or established from seed or plant divisions. It is easily seeded as the seeds do not need cold stratification, with spring seeding being the preferred method over fall planting. It's a widely cultivated ornamental plant that also works well in the "cut-flower" garden.

Invite pollinators and birds to your yard with *Gaillardia aristata*. With its low water needs and long-lasting color it is an excellent choice for a water-wise, bird-friendly garden.