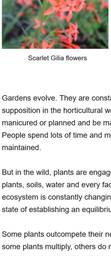
My Plants are Moving!

BY KATHY SETTEVENDEMIE

8 COMMENTS



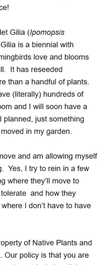
Scarlet Gilia flowers

They did it again! The plants in my garden have migrated from one part of the garden to another.

Plants that I had purposely placed in the partially shady area thinking that was the best place for them have suddenly sprung up in hotter, drier spots. Plants that I thought would be great specimen plants have multiplied, creating wild swaths of color that are gorgeous but not what I had intended. Plants are moving all around the garden, popping up in unexpected places and dying out in others.

My dilemma – try to maintain control of how the garden looks or cast care to the wind and enjoy the show. I'm going with the latter!

Gardens evolve. They are constantly changing. There is a supposition in the horticultural world that gardens should look manicured or planned and be maintained to keep that look. People spend lots of time and money ensuring that control is maintained.

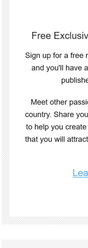


Oregon Sunshine – Eriophyllum lanatum

But in the wild, plants are engaged in the balancing act with other plants, soils, water and every facet of an ecosystem. The ecosystem is constantly changing, but it is also in a constant state of establishing an equilibrium between species.

Some plants outcompete their neighbors causing others die out; some plants multiply, others do not; some plants move to completely new areas while others move around within their preferred habitat.

I suppose they are doing that all the time in the wild and we just don't keep track of exactly where they are located and how much they move, but in our gardens we notice!



Scarlet Gilia – Ipomopsis aggregata

Several years ago there were three Scarlet Gilia (*Ipomopsis aggregata*) plants in my garden. Scarlet Gilia is a biennial with scarlet trumpet shaped flowers that hummingbirds love and blooms for several months in late summer into fall. It has reseeded occasionally in my garden, but never more than a handful of plants. This year, to my surprise and delight, I have (literally) hundreds of seedlings. They are just beginning to bloom and I will soon have a swath of scarlet flowers. Not something I planned, just something that happened as the plants seeded and moved in my garden.

So, I am letting the plants in my garden move and am allowing myself to be delighted as they do their own thing. Yes, I try to rein in a few of them, but most I'm watching, wondering where they'll move to next, trying to learn what conditions they tolerate and how they behave (or don't). It's a journey and one where I don't have to have all the control.

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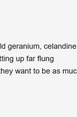

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About Kathy Settevendemie

Kathy Settevendemie is the owner of Blackfoot Native Plants Nursery in Montana and an active promoter of the use of native plants in landscaping. Kathy is an educator, speaker, wildlife enthusiast and gardener who tirelessly shares her love of native plants. Settevendemie is a board member of the Montana Native Plant Society, the chair of their Landscaping Committee, a former gardener at University of Montana Native Plant Garden and she currently conducts workshops and gives talks on landscaping with native plants throughout western Montana. She offers classes in *Gardening with Native Plants* and is the principal editor of *Landscaping with Native Plants of West-Central Montana*. Follow Blackfoot Native Plants Nursery on Facebook

COMMENTS

Deborah Dale says
June 9, 2013 at 12:12 am

so very true Kathy (hence the moniker of my website), and all part of the fun of welcoming natives back into our spaces…waiting to see what will pop up where next. Some plants seems quite happy to stay where I originally suggest to them, others make it clear they want to be elsewhere and still others send their babies out to explore. All of it is far more engaging than any of the well behaved 'plastic' alien species sold at the corner store…and far less scary than the 'drought tolerant / easy care / great spreader' invasive kinds of aliens that grow to terrorize the unwary gardener.

Reply

Jason says
June 9, 2013 at 12:57 pm

Plants migrating around is part of the fun. Columbine, wild geranium, celandine poppy, golden alexander, various rudbeckias – all are adept at setting up far flung outposts that grow into substantial plantings. I leave them where they want to be as much as possible.

Reply

Kathy Settevendemie says
June 10, 2013 at 10:43 am

Jason – sounds absolutely beautiful! What a joy to let them proliferate where they move to!

Reply

Loret says
June 13, 2013 at 11:40 am

HOW FUN! I like your style, Kathy. What a great article and attitude 😀

Loret recently posted..In the throws of passion: Rated "R"

Reply

Diane Holmes says
June 13, 2013 at 11:58 am

At my former home, my Golden Alexander formed a ribbon or river down the middle of my prairie. It was so cool. Just in my new place less than 2 years, so still feverishly planting and waiting to see what will happen here.

Reply

Donna@Gardens Eye View says
June 16, 2013 at 9:51 am

Kathy it is hard to allow them freedom…I do a bit of control but boy it is fun to see where they end up. Most times where I never thought they would.

Donna@Gardens Eye View recently posted..Those Wonderful June Blooms

Reply

Peter Hentges says
July 30, 2013 at 1:57 pm

I've had Silphium perfoliatum (cupplant) take over my front yard due to its prolific seeding. What started as three plants in a nice clump has become 2/3 of my corner lot! The good news is that its broad leaves not only provide ephemeral watering stops for birds and insects, but they also shade out a lot of undesirable plants beneath them.

Still, they are getting to be a bit of a nuisance themselves, so I'll be finding ways to carve them back and get some additional native grasses and forbs into the mix!

Reply

Trackbacks

Hellish Heliopsis says:
July 27, 2013 at 8:55 am
[…] – it is not really suited for a small yard, as it is a crafty species, adept at moving around. It's amazing how much of a crater is left when you remove a large root ball. I have some work […]

Reply

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