

Rating Meadow Rues

The Avant Gardener, May 2007

The genus *Thalictrum* is extremely diverse, with species varying from under 6" to over 10' tall. Many of the almost 150 species of meadow rues have no ornamental value whatsoever, others are spectacularly beautiful – and this even though their flowers lack true petals or at best have colorful petaloid sepals.

A five-year test by the Chicago Botanic Garden evaluated 18 available meadow rues for flower and foliage values, plant health, and hardiness. Eleven received top ratings:

Color	Height	Name
Purple	8'	Hybrid 'Elin'
Lavender	42"	<i>T. aquilegifolium</i> 'purpureum'
Yellow	49"	<i>T. flavum</i> 'Illuminator'
Yellow	72"	<i>T. flavum glaucum</i>
Pink	5"	<i>T. kiusianum</i>
Yellow	72"	<i>T. lucidum</i>
Pale Yellow	61"	<i>T. minus</i> 'Adiantifolium'
Lavender and Yellow	72"	<i>T. rochebrunceanum</i> 'Lavender Mist'
Lavender and Yellow	72"	<i>T. rochebrunceanum</i> 'Purple Mist'

Other widely sold thalictrums, such as *T. delvayi*, failed due to low flower production or lack of hardiness in the Garden's Zone 5 area; these and others now coming into commerce are considered hardy only to Zone 7. Eight species recently collected in the wild in Russia all proved to be poor performers or non-ornamental.

Although meadow rues are generally recommended for shade conditions, all of the highest rated in these tests thrived in full sun, with the exception of *T. aquilefolium*.

The testers concluded that the best thalictrums are excellent low-care perennials offering a wide range of garden uses. For a copy of the report, Plant Evaluation Notes 28, send \$4.25 to the Chicago Botanic Garden (1000 Lake Cook Road, Glencoe, IL 60022).