



HEART OF *darkness* Consider it the dark horse of the sunflower family; while sunflowers go for broke, the diminutive black-eyed Susan, or rudbeckia, is bold, but not brash. She's Mother Nature's version of a down-to-earth drama queen. Intrigued? Let this botanical study in contrasts inspire you to add a dramatic twist to your decor. Dark or dazzling, subdued or showy, take your cue from this bloom and have it all.

board



odd couples

FLOWERS TO INSPIRE DECORATING



PANSIES

Though they come in a variety of hues, the most eye-catching are those with pale flowers and dark patterned centres. Unlike the black-eyed Susan, the charming, inquisitive 'faces' of pansies will likely inspire a more playful touch in your designs.

PETUNIAS

Also available in myriad shapes and colours, the boldest are those with white-to-pink blooms and dark centres. With petals that are often diaphanous and frilly, these beauties evoke a more romantic, feminine style.

IRISES

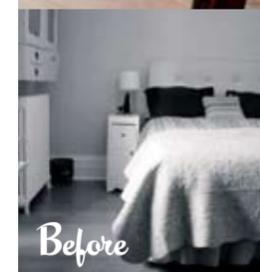
The most common and beloved variety of iris has deep purple petals unfolding to reveal a brilliant yellow centre. For those of a more dramatic bent, consider using dark hues as your base and bright shades as accents.



PLAY WITH patterns Don't let the black-eyed Susan's diminutive size fool you. Her energy is legendary in gardening circles, where she's considered to be one of nature's hardiest plants. Capture that vitality in a striking pattern, such as the one seen here on the pillow (above), which also contrasts beautifully with the yellow striped cushions tucked in behind. Patterns are a clever way to make a dark shade dynamic.



NIGHT AND day Yellow walls lift the spirit and provide a clean, spacious feel to any room. Yet, just as with the black-eyed Susan, the real drama is in the darkness. Turn simple into striking by grounding the yellows and whites with well-placed dark accents. Here, a black vintage lamp and fan offset the light tones of the bedding and walls and give the space a cozier feel. Curtain panels, quilted bedding, antique plates, prints, all Nesters.



This bedroom was punched up with yellow and black to add a level of dramatic dimension.

Though it may seem counter-intuitive, **HEAVIER ITEMS** *enhance*, rather than detract from, a room's delicate, lighter features



THE NEXT step Go beyond colour and consider shapes, textures—and even the weight of objects—when going for a complementary contrast. Here, a dark stain gives wooden furniture a weightier, more substantial feel and creates an interesting visual tension when offset by some lighter-coloured furniture.

BEND THE rules Colour outside of the lines. An exuberant bloomer like the black-eyed Susan would hardly be one to dictate decor rules. Go beyond the simple black and yellow colour palette and consider those hues as a guide not a goal. Use a spectrum of both dark and light shades to create interest—yet still retain the drama. ❖

