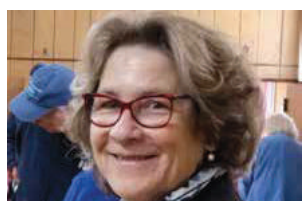




PHOTO BY DEBBY FINLEY

Kniphofias provide beautiful vertical accents in the garden and look impressive with Achillea (yarrow), Hemerocallis (daylilies) and Rudbeckia (coneflowers)

Colorful pokers



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Master Gardner

Red Hot Pokers add flair, toughness to any garden

Question: What is a good plant choice to make a bold statement in my garden?

Answer: Kniphofia uvaria, commonly known as red hot poker, poker plant or torch lily is a herbaceous perennial with showy, torch-like flower heads.

Red hot pokers were split in 1794 from the family of overly large lilies to their own Asphodelaceae family. The genus Kniphofia, native to South Africa, is named after Johann Hieronymus Kniphof, an 18th-century German physician and botanist.

They are closely related to aloes except that Kniphofia don't have very succulent leaves. The sword-shaped, pointy leaves grow in a round clump and the bottle-brush-like flower stalks emerge from the center of the clump in succession starting in early summer.

At the end of the flower stalks are tube-shaped, colorful flower clusters that are tapered, resembling a torch. Hence, the common name torch lily.

Kniphofias change color as the flower matures, exhibiting the deepest shades in bud and fading

as the flower opens, resulting in a bicolor look. Plants remain in bloom for about a month. The flowers produce nectar while blooming which is attractive to bees, hummingbirds and butterflies.

Cutting foliage off at the base of the plant in late fall and removing spent flower spikes encourage more blooms.

Red hot poker plants prefer full sun, in a sandy soil, and must be given adequate spacing to accommodate their mature size as they may spread up to 3 feet over time via rhizomes. The plant thrives in USDA zones 5-9. They are hardy and moderately drought resistant. Regular water is required in order for the plant to reach its full potential.

A layer of mulch can help with water retention and protection during cold winters. Poker plants require adequate drainage and do not tolerate wet feet. They grow best in moist, compost-amended soils that have a neutral or slightly acidic pH.

Plant Kniphofias in the early spring or fall for best results and never plant with their crown deeper than 3 inches.

Red hot poker plants generally don't like to be moved, but you can propagate new plants by dividing the offsets that form around the mother plant in spring. Remove



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the offset plants from the mother plant with a sharp spade and replant in a similar location. Dividing is a way to keep the plant from spreading too wide, but it may take a few years for the offset plant to start flowering.

Kniphofias provide beautiful vertical accents in the garden and look impressive with Achillea (yarrow), Hemerocallis (daylilies) and Rudbeckia (coneflowers). Primarily used in perennial

borders, torch lilies are also well suited to naturalistic settings, water edges or exotic style combinations. These plants are rabbit and deer tolerant and virtually disease free.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at ask.extension.org/ask. Presently, the plant clinic is closed until further notice due to public safety orders.