Nasturtium  
(Tropaeoleum majus)  
A WaterWise Annual

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Nasturtium is such an old standard, common in the gardens of our grandparents and beyond, that it is perhaps difficult to think of this annual as a WaterWise Plant. We use it in hanging baskets, planted in a sunny border, in pots, and many other areas because of its trailing habit and brilliant color forms. Coming readily and quickly from seed, perking up the garden is about as simple as it gets when one uses nasturtium seed.

Worldwide, more than 50 species are known in South and Central America, but the forms we use were first from Peru and Mexico, making their way to the English in the 16th Century according to a website at the University of Vermont Extension Service (http://www.uvm.edu/pss/PPP/articles/nasturtium.html). They were first used not only for decoration but for their peppery flavor and they are still often recommended for this purpose.

An internet image search will bring up a seemingly infinite variety or form, some with bright flowers of oranges and reds predominating, and several with variegated leaves, although some of the wild forms appear to have white flowers.

Although generally healthy, there are some pests and diseases that can affect nasturtiums. According to University of California at Davis (http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/FLOWERS/nasturtium.html) these may include aphids, cabbage worm larvae, whiteflies and other insects and a few viruses and other diseases. Remember also that drought tolerance is somewhat relative, so if your nasturtiums show signs of stress, such as wilting, provide the appropriate water they need for survival especially if they are in pots or hanging baskets.