

Silphium perfoliatum L.
Cup-plant

For those who have a taste for the unusual I highly recommend *Silphium perfoliatum*. This denizen of floodplains and fields has a rather coarse texture and can achieve the impressive height of ten feet, both of which tend to make it a difficult plant to work into the average perennial bed. However, I have a great fondness for this plant. Its pairs of large, opposite leaves are fused together around the stem at their bases, forming a depression in which rain water collects (hence the common name). Late in the summer it produces a spray of golden yellow daisy-like flower heads at the top of the plant which can be quite striking when viewed against the clear blue skies we often get in the fall.

Full sun and constantly moist soils are the best for this species. I have noticed very little in the way of insect or disease damage to this plant; in fact, its main nemesis seems to be drying out of the soil. In more droughty summers its maximum height is more like three or four feet and flowering is earlier.



This is not a species that your normal garden center keeps in stock. But if you really want to give it a try an Internet search should turn up a supplier.