The Betty Ford Alpine Gardens in Vail, Colorado, is the winner of the 2009 Award for Garden Excellence, given jointly by the American Public Gardens Association and Horticulture. At an altitude of 8,200 feet, the Betty Ford Alpine Gardens (bettyfordalpinegardens.org) touts itself as the world's highest botanic garden and showcases outstanding collections of alpine and high-altitude plants grown for conservation, education and public enrichment. More than 100,000 visitors a year enjoy the impeccably presented gardens and discover rare and familiar treasures thriving in the brilliant light of this mountain environment. An extensive program for children and programs in horticultural therapy broaden the gardens' mission. “Each week provides a different, more beautiful picture,” says Mrs. Ford, who continues her long-term interest in the garden.
An award-winning garden rooted at high altitude
Opposite: The Mountain Perennial Garden is a magnet for visitors throughout the seasons with its glorious color and parade of flowers illustrating the many choice plants that thrive at high altitudes. Above left: The salmon-colored flowers of *Lewisia tweedyi* greet visitors. Above right: The pale yellow of the alpine poppy (*Papaver kluanense*) graces the garden in late June. Below: Bulbs grow superbly in the garden, including the blazing orange fire lily (*Lilium bulbiferum*).