

*The Garden Tutors*



GARDEN DESIGN & EDUCATION

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# Choosing Perennials

Perennials, garden plants that come back more than one year, are wonderful additions to any garden. In a young garden they are fast and easy fillers. As the garden matures they are a way of bring color and interest into the garden. although perennials are not NO work they are generally easy to care for.

## Keep in mind as you choose

*Exposure:* The amount of sun and moisture are the first things to consider. There are choices for full sun to complete shade.

*Size :* How much room do you have? Be careful to choose perennials that are in scale with your area.

*Growth form:* This is plant shape: tall and spiky; low cushion; rounded and shrub like. Look for contrasting shapes to put near one another.

*Flower color:* Flower color is only one of the elements to consider. Decide if you want a monochromatic garden with shades of the same color, a color coordinated garden, or a wild mixed garden.

*Foliage color :* Foliage color is almost as important as flower color. Look to place

pleasing and contrasting foliage colors against one another.

*Texture:* Texture is another important element in a pleasing arrangement. Look for at least a few plants with strongly contrasting texture.

*Experiment:* Don't be afraid to try combinations. Put them together at the nursery and if you like them, try them. If the plant arrangement doesn't work in your yard most perennials are easily moved.

*Combine with permanent shrubs:* Combining perennials into your shrub plantings is a good way to add variety in color, texture, growth form and seasonal interest.

*Evergreen or Deciduous:* Most perennials are either deciduous or are pruned to the ground in the winter. A few are evergreen and show all winter long.

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# Dependable Perennials for the SUN:

USUAL

AVAILABILITY:

## Low growing or ground cover

- Feb - June Arctotis - Low growing with greyed foliage and Daisy style flowers in several colors
- All Year Artemisia "Silver Mound" - Low growing with silver foliage. Deciduous.
- All Year Bidens – This is a low growing perennial with masses of golden yellow flowers almost all year. Generally a three to five year perennial.
- All Year Cerastium (Snow in Summer) - Silver grey foliage with small wt. flowers in late spring.
- Feb - Sept Chrysanthemum hosmariense - Fine cut grey foliage with 2" daisy flowers all summer.
- Mar-July Coreopsis "Nana" - Low clump with short golden yellow flowers all spring and summer.
- Mar-Sept Erigeron (Several types) - one with tiny almost white flowers, and one with 2" lavender flowers on clumping plant.
- Mar-Sept Cranesbill ( several varieties ) – Varieties vary with flowers from blue to rosy pink. Some clumping and some spreading plants. Varieties vary from 6-18" tall or even larger.
- Nov-Mar. Iberis (Candytuft) - Masses of white flowers in early spring on a small clumping plant
- Mar-July Odonospermum (Gold Coin) - Low with yellow daisy flowers all summer
- Mar-Oct Scabiosa "Butterfly Blue" - Low clumping plant with medium sized blue flowers all spring and summer.
- Mar-June Scaevola (several) - Low ground cover with lavender-blue to white flowers in summer
- Mar-June Stachys "Silver Carpet" - Soft, fuzzy silver foliage 4-6" long. Grows as a low mat.

**Grasses:** These plants create interesting textures and colors. Used as accents, grasses create unique effects.

- All Year Carex (Sedge) - Many interesting varieties. Most common are a couple of small variegated foliage varieties.
- All Year Cortaderia (Pampas Grass) - Large growing, to 12 ft., with striking plumes. Pumila is a heavy blooming dwarf, to 8 ft. tall.
- All Year Festuca (Fescue) - There are several blue shades, as well as a green form. Small clumping plant.
- All Year Helictotrichon (Blue Oat Grass) - Like a large blue fescue, to 18" tall. Striking plant.
- April-Aug Imperata (Blood Grass) - Striking reddish foliage growing to 2'. Deciduous.
- April-Sept Pennisetum (Fountain Grass) - These vary with reddish or green foliage. Many turn striking light brown in the winter. Prune to ground when unattractive in the winter. There are forms that grow from 1' to 4' tall

## Medium sized (with rounded growth):

- Mar-June Artemisia "Powis Castle" - Fine textured silver-grey foliage to 3' +.
- April - Sept Aster frikarti - Upright to 2' tall with lavender blue flowers all summer. Deciduous.
- April - Sept Aster "Prof. Kippenberg" (Michalmas Daisy) - Clumping with lavender blue flowers to 18" tall. Prune to the ground in the winter.
- April - June Aster pilosus - Fine textured with fluffy feel. Small white flowers in summer. Prune to the ground in the winter.
- April - July Guara linderhami - Open, arching perennial with small white or pink flowers in the summer.
- April - May Gypsophyla (Baby Breath) - Sprays of small double flowers in the summer. Most often white.
- April - May Helichrysum (Straw Flower) - Stiff double straw flowers in the spring and early summer.
- Mar-July Lavender (several kinds) - Silver-grey foliage with spikes of lavender flowers in spring and summer. Varieties grow from 18" - 36" tall and wide.
- April - July Statice - Bold foliage with sprays of small purple flowers all summer and fall. Evergreen.
- April - Sept Penstemon (several kinds) - Green foliage on arching plants with purple, red, pink or white flowers in the summer.
- April - July Salvia gregii - Fine textured plant with open spikes of reddish, pink, or white flowers in the summer. Evergreen.
- April - June Salvia leucantha - Bold grey foliage with deep purple-blue flowers in the summer. Evergreen.
- All Year Senecio (Dusty Miller) - Striking silver foliage on a bushy plant. Texture varies from bold to very fine. Evergreen.

Medium sized with spiky or Iris texture or flowers.

- Mar-Sept Yarrow (several) - Fine textured foliage, grey green to silver, with flowers of pink, lavender to reddish or yellow.
- May-Aug Canna - Upright with bold texture and bright colored summer flowers. Cut to ground in the winter.
- May-Aug Canna "Tropicana" - New! Bright multicolored foliage with striking orange flowers. Cut to ground in the winter.
- April-Aug Coreopsis "Moonbeam" - Very fine textured foliage with soft golden yellow flowers. Deciduous.
- Feb-May Delphinium (low to medium varieties) - Flower spikes in shades of blue-lavender, pink or white. Not long lived, but so beautiful we are including them.

- Mar-June Dianella - Foliage perennial with broad strap-like foliage. Comes variegated or green or blue -grey. Evergreen.
- All Year Daylily ( many) - Striking summer color in shades of yellow, orange, pink and lavender. Varieties come deciduous or evergreen, from 1' to 3' tall.
- May-June Iris (Japanese) - Upright iris foliage with striking streaked and variegated flowers in mid summer. Takes wet to normal water conditions. Deciduous.
- May Iris (Siberian) - Fine textured iris foliage with Dutch Iris like flowers in blue shades. Deciduous.
- Sept-Oct Iris (bearded) - Many colors. Reliable plant in our area.
- April -Aug Black Eyed Susan (Goldstrum) - This is a reliable summer blooming perennial. Yellow flowers with black eye. Bold foliage, clumping growth. Prune to ground after bloom fades.
- April - Aug Purple Cone Flower - Striking purple-pink daisy flowers in mid summer. Prune to ground after bloom fades.

#### Tall Background Perennials.

- Feb-May Delphinium (tall varieties) - Tall spikes in shades of blue-lavender, pink or white. Not long lived, but so beautiful we are including them.
- May -July Hibiscus moscheutos: Huge flowers in shades of pink, carmine red or white. Prune to 12" above the ground in the winter.
- May -June Lavatera: Another hibiscus type plant with masses of lavender pink blooms in the summer.

#### Dependable Perennials for SHADE or PART SHADE.

##### Low growing or ground cover.

- All Year Bergenia (Saxafrage) - Large bold texture with spikes of rosey pink flowers in fall or winter. Evergreen.
- Mar-April Brunnera - Airy blue flowers like Forget-me-not in late spring.
- Feb- July Campanula (Bell Flower)- Many kinds. Some with low spreading ground cover and others with spikes ranging from 16-36" tall. Evergreen.
- Mar-April Gallium (Sweet Woodruff) - Low, spreading, woody ground cover. Small white flowers in the summer. Evergreen.
- Feb-May Heuchera (Coral Bells) - Clumping plant with clusters of small flowers in coral pinks most often. Some varieties have striking foliage in shades of purple to silver. Evergreen.

- April -Aug Hosta - Primarily a foliage plant. Varieties with gold, white, green, or blue green foliage. Varieties from 12-36" tall and wide. Most have flower spikes in late summer. Control snails. Deciduous.
- All Year Liriope - Grassy texture with green or gold or white variegated foliage. Evergreen.
- All Year Lamium - Low, spreading ground cover. Variegated silver foliage. Evergreen.
- Mar-Aug Omphaloides - Like a perennial Forget-me-not flower. Clumping plant to about 6in. tall
- Sept-Feb Oxalis - Masses of lavender, white or pink blooms in the winter. Dormant in summer.
- All Year Viola - Includes common Violet in purple or white; and Australian Violet, a spreading variety with white and blue flowers over a long blooming season.

Medium sized with mounding growth – for shade to part shade

- July - Oct Anemone (Japanese) - Spreading, clumping plant with fall flowers in shades of lavender, pink or white. Anemone sylvestris is our favorite.
- April -July Astilbe- Ferny foliage with full plumes of flowers in late spring-summer. Shades of white, pink, lavender or white. Deciduous. Variety 'Arnesii superba seems to be more heat resistant.
- April - Aug Campanula - A number of campanula fit here. Peach Leafed Blue Bell is one example.
- Mar-Oct Chrysanthemum (Shasta Daisy) - Depending on variety, Shastas have showy single or formal double or shaggy double white flowers on 12-18" stems. Part shade.
- Feb-April Columbine - Distinctive spurred flowers in shades of pink, white, lavender, or blue on 12" plants. Columbine is ferny textured and deciduous. Prune to ground in summer.
- All Year Clivia - This is a strap-leaved plant with brilliant flowers in shades of orange in umbels (like an agapanthus.) Evergreen.
- April -Aug Hosta - Hostas are noted for the striking foliage. Variegated white and green, gold and green or blue-green are typical colors.
- Sept-Feb Helleborus - Good sized perennials with evergreen foliage and unusual single flowers in shades of green, purple or white.
- June-July Tradescantia (Spiderwort)- Clumping, loose growing, with showy single flowers in either white or light blue.

Tall or upright growing – for shade to part shade

- Mar-June      Aconitium (Monks Hood) - Tall growing plant with blue or purple spikes in the late summer. Deciduous.
- Jan-Mar        Campanula (Canterbury Bells) - Tall spikes of flowers in shades of blue, lavender or white.
- Jan-Mar        Foxglove - Tall spikes with spotted flowers in rosy shades of pink, lavender, or white. Not long lived, but so beautiful we are including them.
- Mar-June       Lobelia cardinalis - This Lobelia is tall growing with reddish foliage and red flowers in the summer. Likes lots of water.