

## Easier-to-Grow Perennial Flowers

Gardening has grown more complex in recent years, and the enormous number of available plants adds to this complexity. Faced with so many plant choices – choosing the perfect plant can become overwhelming. It's enough to make veteran gardeners cringe and novice gardeners flee!

In response to this overabundance of plant choices, many gardeners choose not to choose. They stick to their old ways, growing tried and true garden plants – vegetables, flowering shrubs, annuals, fruit trees or such. They especially avoid plants with high-maintenance reputations, such as perennial flowers. They are doomed to admire these beauties only in other gardens, forever envious of their neighbor's perennial borders....

But wait – don't despair! You can enjoy perennial flowers without taking time away from other gardening passions. Many perennials are actually easy to grow! But with thousands of perennial plant choices, which ones are they? We've done the research for you, and created the following lists of easy-care perennials. But first a word of caution – as with all lists of recommended plants, actual growing conditions should determine your final plant selections. To improve your chances of achieving a low-maintenance, but beautiful perennial garden – take time to learn the specific needs of these plants before purchasing and planting them. Then – go forth, plant, and stop envying your neighbor's yard!

- Note: square bullets denote bloom periods of 6 weeks or more.

## Perennial Plant Association – Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association chooses a "Plant of the Year" based upon these criteria: suitable for a wide range of climate types, low maintenance needs, easy propagation, and multi-seasonal interest (see the [Perennial Plant Association's website](#) for detailed information about each plant).

- 2002 Border Phlox – *Phlox paniculata* 'David'
- 2001 Feather Reed Grass – *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'
- 2000 Pincushion Flower – *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue'
- 1999 Black-eyed Susan – *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'
- 1998 Purple Coneflower – *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'
- 1997 Perennial Salvia – *Salvia* 'May Night'
- 1996 Foxglove Penstemon – *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red'
- 1995 Russian Sage – *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
- 1994 Astilbe – *Astilbe* 'Sprite'
- 1993 Speedwell – *Veronica* 'Sunny Border Blue'
- 1992 Threadleaf Coreopsis – *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'

- 1991 Coralbells – *Heuchera micrantha* 'Palace Purple'
- 1990 Creeping Phlox – *Phlox stolonifera*

## Herbaceous Perennials That Can Take Neglect – *and* – Bloom 6 Weeks or More

A combination of two lists from *Pacific Northwest Gardener's Book of Lists* by Ray and Jan McNeilan.

- Common Yarrow – *Achillea millefolium*
- Corydalis – *Corydalis lutea*
- Whirling Butterflies – *Gaura lindheimeri*
- Helen's Flower – *Helenium autumnale*
- Evergreen Candytuft – *Iberis sempervirens*
- Sedum – *Sedum* spp.

## Lower Maintenance Perennials – that are not – Reseeding Plants

A combination of two lists from *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden* by Tracy DiSabato-Aust.

- Spiny Bear's Breeches – *Acanthus spinosus*
- Gold Yarrow – *Achillea* 'Coronation Gold'
- Southernwood – *Artemisia abrotanum*
- White Mugwort – *Artemisia lactiflora*
- Painted Arum – *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum'
- Goat's Beard – *Aruncus dioicus*
- European Wild Ginger – *Asarum europaeum*
- Jin Dai Tatarian Aster – *Aster tataricus* 'Jin Dai'
- Double Japanese Aster – *Asteromoea mongolica*
- Wild Blue Indigo – *Baptisia australis*
- Heartleaf Bergenia – *Bergenia cordifolia*
- Snowbank Boltonia – *Boltonia asteroides* 'Snowbank'
- Plumbago – *Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*
- Pink Turtlehead – *Chelone lyonii*
- Hairy Goldaster – *Chrysopsis villosa* (*Heterotheca villosa*)
- Bugbane – *Cimicifuga racemosa*
- Threadleaf Coreopsis – *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'
- Bath's Pink Cheddar Pink – *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Bath's Pink'
- Gas Plant – *Dictamnus albus*
- Red Barrenwort – *Epimedium x rubrum*

- Gateway Joe-Pye Weed – *Eupatorium maculatum* 'Gateway'
- Queen of the Prairie – *Filipendula rubra* 'Venusta'
- Whirling Butterflies – *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies'
- Broad-petaled Geranium – *Geranium platypetalum*
- Spike Gayfeather – *Liatris spicata*
- Bigleaf Ligularia – *Ligularia dentata*
- Sea Lavender – *Limonium latifolium*
- Creeping Lilyturf – *Liriope spicata*
- Russian Sage – *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
- Early Phlox – *Phlox maculata*
- Creeping Phlox – *Phlox stolonifera*
- Variegated Solomon's Seal – *Polygonatum odoratum* 'Variegatum'
- Pasque Flower – *Pulsatilla vulgaris* (*Anemone pulsatilla*)
- Fingerleaf Rodgersia – *Rodgersia aesculifolia*
- Herbstsonne Coneflower – *Rudbeckia nitida* 'Herbstsonne'
- Perennial Salvia – *Salvia nemorosa*
- Japanese Burnet – *Sanguisorba obtusa*
- Rock Soapwort – *Saponaria ocymoides*
- Scented Oxeye – *Telekia speciosa* (*Bupthalmum speciosum*)
- Meadow Rue – *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*
- Southern Lupine – *Thermopsis caroliniana*
- Foamflower – *Tiarella cordifolia*

## Top Ten List of Easier-to-Grow Perennials

After careful consideration of all plant characteristics (and some biased opinions...), the following ten perennials should find a home in everyone's garden!

- Black-eyed Susan – *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldstrum'
- Perennial Salvia – *Salvia* 'May Night'
- Russian Sage – *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
- Threadleaf Coreopsis – *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'
- Gold Yarrow – *Achillea* 'Coronation Gold'
- Bath's Pink Cheddar Pink – *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Bath's Pink'
- Gateway Joe-Pye Weed – *Eupatorium maculatum* 'Gateway'
- Whirling Butterflies – *Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies'
- *Hosta*

- Creeping Phlox – *Phlox stolonifera*

## Resources

Disabato-Aust, Tracy. *The Well-Tended Perennial Garden*. Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1998.

McNeilan, Ray and Jan. *The Pacific Northwest Gardener's Book of Lists*. Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing, 1997.

Cox, Jeff. *Perennial All Stars*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press, 1998.

[Perennial Plant Association](#)