

HERE TODAY... HERE TOMORROW

A perennial garden will bring color to the landscape year after year without the headaches of re-planting.

by Ann Reilly



Staudenbeet is one type of a low-maintenance perennial.

Many clichés can be called upon to explain the explosion in popularity of perennials. It's true that they came back into style, just as old clothes, beards and hairstyles often do. It's also a fact that the tried-and-true have proven themselves again to be steady, reliable and dependable.

But the main reason that perennials are being used increasingly in all landscape situations is a simple one: they're good.

By definition, a perennial is a plant that will survive in the landscape for three or more years (as opposed to an annual or a biennial), going dormant

each winter (generally with the tops dying down), and regrowing in spring.

The term "herbaceous" is often tacked on to "perennial" to distinguish the soft and fleshy stems of perennials from those of woody trees and shrubs. Bulbs, although fitting the definition, are generally classified separately because of their unique system of food self-storage. For purposes of landscape planning and this article, however, they will be treated as though they were one and the same.

Bulbs and perennials

The appeal of bulbs and perennials to

the landscape manager is their versatility, low maintenance (with proper selection, as explained later) and permanence. Perennials adapt to every soil, moisture condition or light situation. They can be used in either formal or informal designs.

Relief of the year-round sameness of the landscape is achieved with perennial color without the replanting of annuals each year. Bulbs bring color earliest and can complement the spring flowering ornamental cherries, crabapples, dogwoods and other trees as well as shrubs. Where annuals will be used, perennials should be thought of as a regular seasonal backdrop and a critical part of the landscape plan.

Choosing a design

The beginning of any truly successful landscape is a thoughtful design. Before sketching anything out on paper, consider the following design criteria:

- From what angles will the landscape be viewed? What are the existing topographical and permanent features?
- Is the design to be formal or informal?
- What plants fit the design needs? Let's start with location.

If the site is a small business, is the beauty of the landscape to edify the employees or attract passersby? Is it to be viewed from the street, from the employee cafeteria or from the conference room? If the site is a residence, does the homeowner want to enjoy it from inside in the breakfast nook or outside on the patio? Location also will determine whether the design will call for borders (viewed from one side) or for beds (also called islands and viewed from all sides).

Next, study the existing and permanent features. Are there fences or other buildings nearby? What color and design are they? Are there trees which will remain? If they are large, you'll need to consider shade. With smaller, flowering trees and shrubs, look to coordinate bloom time and color.

Is the landscape irregular, with slopes, hills and rock outcroppings? You'll have to keep your design in

keeping with what you've got to work with from the aspects of size, scale, color and design.

An ultra-modern office complex would demand a formal, bold, warm-colored approach whereas a bank building with an early-American architectural style would call for something more informal. Steep slopes will call for more lowgrowing, ground-covering perennials. Note also the size, style and location of paths, parking lots, driveways and signs.

Your situation will command a decision about whether you should plan an informal or formal garden. If your site is open and flat, you are lucky in that you have more leeway to choose either style.

Formal or informal?

If you choose a formal design, you will tend toward straight lines, symmetry, a geometric shape and perhaps a single object such as a statue, pool or fountain to serve as a focal point.

Today's life and building styles are more likely to call for an informal approach, with a predominance of soft, flowing lines and a seeming disregard for symmetry. Curves frequently follow the natural terrain, making this type of design a must for hilly or wooded situations.

The final, and perhaps most important decision, is the choice of the pe-

rennials themselves to complete the scene. You must take into account the color, height, spread, form, texture, bloom season, light requirements, style, use and maintenance needs of the plants, combining them so the landscape will have variety and contrast while still being cohesive.

Color

Color has the greatest impact on your landscape. To learn a few basic principles used by artists, buy a simple color wheel and study complementary colors. Greens, blue and violets are cool; they recede, give a subdued effect, are best for close-up viewing. Reds, oranges and yellows are warm colors; they advance, create a dramatic affect, and catch your eye. Remember also that foliage has color as well as flowers. *Artemisia* and *dusty miller*, for example, add tones of silver and grey to the perennial border.

Height and forms

The height of perennials ranges from only inches to many feet. Place taller plants, like *delphinium*, *lythrum*, *liatris* and *phlox* at the rear of the border or center of the bed, with other heights graduated toward the front or the edge.

Low-growers like *English daisy* or *forget-me-not* will receive front billing. Some mixture of heights also

keeps boredom away.

The forms of perennials are classed into three different shapes: spiked, rounded and prostrate. Combine a variety of these for interest, and repeat them for harmony. For example, you could combine the tall, upright *liatris* or *lupines* with the mounded *gaillardia* or *doronicum*, bordered by low growing *sedum* or *candytuft*. Consider, too, that flowers have different shapes as well.

Texture and bloom season

Texture refers to a plant's appearance. The small or dissected leaves of perennials, like *yarrow*, have a fine texture, creating a feeling of airiness. The large leaves of *hollyhock* are coarser and create a feeling of solid space.

Bloom season varies from plant to plant, ranging from spring to fall and usually lasting about one month. As an exception, *coreopsis*, *gloriosa daisy* and a few more bloom all summer long. Most gardeners plan for a succession of bloom: *primrose* for April, *foxglove* for May, *poppy* for June, *scabiosa* for July, *phlox* for August, *liriobe* for September and *mums* for October. These dates will vary according to your location. Coordinating all of this can be complicated and challenging, but fascinating as well.

Light requirement can be from full



Staudenrabatte provides a mixed border.

Popular Garden Perennials

Perennials are plants that usually live for more than two years. Their foliage and stems may die during winter but each spring new shoots emerge.

Use the chart below as a guide in selecting your perennials. Remember — regional, varietal and cultural differences may affect the performance of your perennials.

Name	Spacing (inches)	Height (inches)	Flower Colors	Season of Bloom	Light	Additional Information
<i>Achillea filipendulina</i> (Fern-Leaf Yarrow)	12-18	over 36	Y., W.	June-Sept.	Sun	Beds, cut flowers, dried arrangements.
<i>Anthemis tinctoria</i> (Golden Marguerite)	12	12-36	Y., O.	June-Aug.	Sun	Borders, beds, cut flowers.
<i>Aquilegia sp.</i> (Columbine)	18	18-36	W., Y., O., Pk., B., P.	May-June	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, borders, cut flowers, accents.
<i>Armeria maritima</i> (Thrift, Sea Pinks)	8	8-12	Pk.-Crim., W.	June-July	Sun	Rock gardens, borders, edging.
<i>Artemisia ludoviciana albula</i> (Silver-King)	36	36	W.	Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Grown mainly for silvery leaves. Accent.
<i>Aster x Frikarti</i> (Aster)	36	12-36	Lav., B.	July-Nov.	Sun	Beds, fall accent.
<i>Astilbe x Arendsii</i> [†] (Astilbe)	18-24	24-36	W., Pk., P., R.	June-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Moist location. Beds, borders.
<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i> (also <i>Alyssum</i>) (Basket-of-Gold)	18	6-12	Y.	Apr.-June	Sun	Trailing habit. Rock gardens
<i>Bellis perennis</i> (English Daisy)	12	4-6	W., Pd., R.	Jan.-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Slow-spreading clump. Borders, rocks gardens
<i>Catananche caerulea</i> (Cupid's Dart)	8-10	24	B., W.	June-Aug.	Sun	Borders, beds, dried flowers.
<i>Cerastium tomentosum</i> (Snow-in-Summer)	12	6	W.	June	Sun	Silver-white foliage. Borders, rock gardens.
<i>Chrysanthemum maximum</i> (Shasta Daisy)	24	24 to over 48	W.	June-Oct.	Sun	Dbl. and Sg. flowers. Beds, accents, cut flowers.
<i>Chrysanthemum morifolium</i> (Hardy Mum)	24	12-48	P., R., Br., W., Y., Pk.	Aug.-Nov.	Sun	Borders, fall accents.
<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i> 'Grandiflora' (Coreopsis)	15	24-36	Y., O.	All summer	Sun	Well-drained soil. Beds, borders, cut flowers.
<i>Delphinium elatum</i> (Delphinium)	18-24	36-84	W., Pk., B., P.	June-Aug.	Sun	Reblooms if old blooms are cut. Beds, cut flowers
<i>Diathus Caryophyllus</i> (Carnations, Pinks)	12-18	12-30	W., Pk., R., Y.	June-Sept.	Sun	Beds, borders, cut flowers.
<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i> (Bleeding Heart)	15	24-36	Rk.-R., W.	May-June	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, specimens.
<i>Doronicum cordatum</i> (Leopard's-Bane)	12	10-30	Y.	May-June	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, cut flowers.
<i>Echinops exaltatus</i> (Globe Thistle)	18-24	36-60	B.	July-Sept.	Sun	Tolerates dry soil. Borders, dried flowers.
<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i> (Blanket Flower)	10-12	24-36	O., Y., Maroon	June-Sept.	Sun	Beds, borders, cut flowers.
<i>Geum Quellyon</i> (Chilean avens)	10-12	under 24	Y.-O., Pk.-R.	June-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Borders, beds.
<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i> (Baby's Breath)	48	over 36	W., Pk.	June-Oct.	Sun	Beds, borders, rock gardens, cut flowers.
<i>Heuchera sanguinea</i> (Coral Bells)	12	under 24	W., Pk.-R.	June-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Edging borders, rock gardens, cut flowers.
<i>Hosta sp.</i> (Funkia, Plantain Lily)	12-15	10-24	W., B., Lav.	July-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Popular for foliage. Foundations, beds, borders.
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i> (Candytuft)	12	6-8	Pk., W.	May-June	Sun to Pt. Shade	Borders, rock gardens.
<i>Kniphofia Uvaria</i> (also <i>Tritoma</i>) (Red Hot Poker)	18-24	24 to over 36	W., Y., O., Pk.-R.	July-Sept.	Sun	Don't divide clumps. Accents, beds
<i>Lathyrus latifolius</i> (Perennial Peas)	24	96-120	Pk., W., R.	June-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Fragrant blooming vine. Trail up posts.
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> (Lavender)	15-18	18-36	P.	July-Sept.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, borders, rock gardens
<i>Liatris spicata</i> (Gay-feather)	18	24 to over 36	B., P.	July-Sept.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, borders, accents.
<i>Linum perenne</i> (Perennial Blue Flax)	12-18	24	B.	May-July	Sun	Borders, beds.
<i>Lupinus Russell Hybrids</i> (Lupine)	18	24-36	W., Y., B., Pk., R., P.	May-July	Sun to Pt. Shade	Beds, borders, cut flowers. Cool weather.
<i>Denothera missouriensis</i> (Evening Primrose)	12	12	Y.	June-Sept.	Sun	Flowers remain open in day. Beds, Borders.
<i>Papaver orientale</i> (Oriental Poppy)	18	24-36	W., Pk.-R., S.	June	Sun	Beds. Foliage disappears during July and August.
<i>Penstemon barbatus</i> (Beard Tongue)	12-18	36-72	Carmine	July-Sept.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Provides good drainage. Beds.
Perennial Grasses are striking additions to most gardens. Many are tall growing for accent or background. Others are low and compact—perfect as edging. Foliage comes in shades of green and variegated.						
<i>Phlox paniculata</i> (Phlox)	24	24 to over 36	W., Pk.-R., B.-P.	June-Sept.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Reblooms if old blooms are cut. Medium background.
<i>Primula x polyantha</i> (Primrose)	10	under 12	W., Y., Pk., R., B., P.	May-June	Pt. Shade	Cool moist are. Beds, borders, rock gardens.
<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i> (Coneflower)	12-15	24-36	Y., O.	July-Oct.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Background in bed.
<i>Scabiosa caucasica</i> (Pincushion Flower)	12-15	18-30	B., Lav., W., Mauve	July-Aug.	Sun	Borders, beds, cut flowers.
<i>Sedum sp.</i> (Stonecrop)	8-24	2-18	Y., R., W., Pk., P.	May-Aug.	Sun to Pt. Shade	Rock gardens, specimens. Dry soil
<i>Sempervivum tectorum</i> (Hen and Chicks)	15	3-8	Pk., R.	July-Aug.	Sun	Beds, Edging, rock gardens. Dry soil

Key to Colors:

Blue—B.	Lavender—Lav.	Red—R.
Bronze—Br.	Orange—O.	Salmon—S.
Crimson—Crim.	Pink—Pk.	White—W.
Dark Red—Dk. R.	Purple—P.	Yellow—Y.

Partially shaded areas are those which receive four hours or less of direct sunlight per day.

Flowers from page 44

sun through deep shade.

Spreadability

Some perennials spread more than others. You'll want to design the landscape so the plants are just touching when fully grown. This will impact that dramatic affect you'll observe in English gardens that seems to stagger the U.S. mentality. It's full but not crowded.

After you've chosen your design style, choose perennials that fit it as well. Tulips and hyacinths are so formal in style that they'd be difficult to use in an informal design; conversely, daffodils are informal plants and don't fit the formal garden well. Taller, stately perennials, such as delphinium and foxglove, find their best homes as well in the formal setting.

Using perennials

Uses of perennials don't stop in beds or borders. For an accent, try peonies or daylilies. For a hedge, astilbe or veronica. As a screen, loosestrife or false indigo. To unify a shrub border, grape hyacinths followed by hosta or coral bells. As a ground cover, ajuga, perennial geranium, sedum or creeping phlox.

Lastly, consider the amount of maintenance you can devote to the perennial plantings. Many plants you can choose need little or no maintenance: bulbs that don't need replacement or digging often and perennials that don't need frequent division, spraying, staking.

For example, tulips and hyacinths among bulbs; andiris, peonies, phlox and delphinium will demand more attention than choices like grape hyacinth, various squills, daylilies, hosta, coral bells, coreopsis, evening primrose, astilbe and gaillardia.

Planting and care

Perennials can be planted any time the ground is workable from spring through fall. In most cases, you'll be planting perennials from some sort of a container ranging from a pack to a gallon can. In the heat of summer, be careful when planting not to disturb the root ball, and take a little extra care after planting to keep well watered until established.

Incorporation of organic matter such as peat moss, leaf mold or compost will be beneficial for good growth. At the same time, add a phosphorus source such as bone meal or superphosphate to ensure good root growth.

During the year, maintenance is not difficult. Removal of dead flowers when faded and an annual application of a balanced fertilizer, such as 5-10-5, are generally all that is necessary in addition to routine watering.

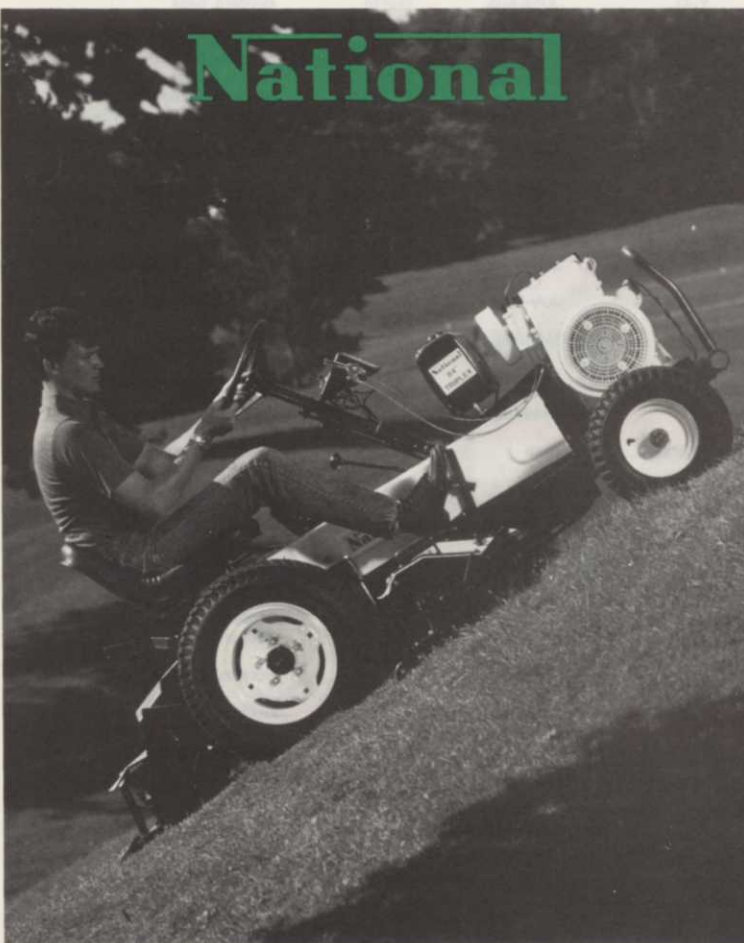
Perennials such as candytuft, basket of gold and others that hug the ground with profuse bloom benefit from a shearing with hedge clippers after they bloom to keep them compact.

Creating the perennial garden

A combination of your creativity coupled with the basics outlined is all you need to get started with using perennials in the landscape. Several suggestions for gardens are given. Simply choose some or all of the plants listed for a continuous bloom. The chart outlines color, height, spacing, bloom season and light requirements to help you further.

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Bedding Plants Inc., a non-profit association dedicated to disseminating information on the use of flowers in the landscape, has free information available to assist you in planning the perennial garden. For your copy, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Perennials in the Landscape, 210 Cartwright Boulevard, Massapequa Park, NY 11762.



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