Plants for Specific Places & Purposes

Curbside, Rain Garden, Dry Shade, Lengthy Bloom, Long-lasting Cuts, Tall Back Borders

*MORE: native, recommended, woody and pollinator plants at plantnebraska.org/plants

Curbside Plantings
Street plantings can be hard to mow, difficult to water without runoff, are exposed to the elements and have to withstand foot traffic and snow-removal applications. Prairie plants meet many of these challenges since they’re deep-rooted to withstand drought, heat and exposure, are adaptable to difficult soils and need very little care. Here are some other plants worth trying.

For groundcovers consider: wild strawberry; prairie smoke; ajuga; snow-in-summer; plumbago; lamb’s ears; bloody cranesbill; and Corydalis. For salt-tolerance, good groundcovers include: candytuft; sedum; coral bells; hosta; and Artemisia.

Low-maintenance grasses like blue and sideoats grama, buffalograss and switchgrass can be used to replace turf. For spring color, they can be interplanted with bulbs that will be showy until the grasses fill in and eventually cover the dead foliage of the short tulips, squill, tiny irises (Iris reticulata) or other bulbs planted among the grasses.

Low perennials for hot, dry areas include: evening primrose; daylily; feverfew; yarrow; basket-of-gold; purple poppy mallow; prairie phlox; coneflower; butterfly milkweed; curly or prairie onion; and aromatic aster.

Rain Garden Plants
Areas that accumulate rainwater runoff need to withstand extremes of both wet and dry.

Grasses: Indiangrass, big bluestem, switchgrass, feather reed grass, cordgrass, rush (corkscrew, inland, Torrey’s, spike) and *sedges (bristly, gray’s, palm, bottlebrush, broom, tussock. *Yellow nutsgde is NOT a true Carex).

Perennials: Iris, sweetflag, nodding pink onion, swamp milkweed, flat-topped and New England aster, turtlehead, purple and prairie coneflower, Joe-Pye plant, Filipendula, gayfeather, obedient plant, Rudbeckia, bottle gentian, culver’s root, meadow rue, hibiscus.

Dry Shade
It can be challenging to grow plants under trees, between buildings or beneath north-facing eaves where rainwater is often deflected and plants compete for moisture, root space, nutrients and airflow. Below are some options but, like any plant, the first year or two they need to be well-watered until their roots are well-established.

Ajuga
Baneberry, Actaea rubra
Barren strawberry, Waldsteinia
Bear’s breeches, Acanthus
Bergenia
Bleeding heart, Dicentra
Brunnera
Columbine, Aquilegia

Lily of the valley, Convallaria
Coral bells, Heuchera
Corydalis
Daylily, Hemerocallis
Epimedium
Euphorbia
False Solomon’s seal, Smilacina stellata
Ferns
Foam flower, Tiarella
Foxglove, Digitalis
Geranium (perennial)
Hosta
Jack-in-the-pulpit, Asarum
Lady’s mantle, Alchemilla
Lamb’s ear, Stachys
Lamium
Lenten rose, Helleborus
Liriope
Mahonia
Meadow rue, Thalictrum
Pachysandra
Periwinkle, Vinca minor
Sedum
Snow-in-summer, Cerastium
Solomon’s seal, Polygonatum
St. Johns wort, Hypericum
Wild ginger, Asarum canadense

Lengthy Bloom Period
The average perennial blooms about three weeks, but some will bloom for several months. Bloom length is one of the primary considerations in many plant selection trials, so this is one instance in which a particular cultivar can make a big difference. Landscapes vary greatly in terms of soil, sun, moisture, surroundings and microclimate so results will vary, but these perennials tend to bloom for several months. *

Denotes plants for part shade; most of these prefer full sun.

Agastache ‘Blue Fortune’ and Agastache Coronado®
Aster x frikartii ‘Monch’ and ‘Wunder von Stäfa’
*Bleeding heart, Dicentra eximia and D. formosa
*Campanula carpatica
Catmint or Nepeta
Coneflower or Echinacea
Coreopsis auriculata, lanceolata, rosea and verticillata
* Corydalis lutea
Gaillardia
Black eyed Susan, Rudbeckia fulgida ‘Goldsturm’ etc.

Gaura
* Geranium ‘Rozanne’ ‘Jolly Bee’ and others
Long-lasting Cuts

Many plants that make for a beautiful landscape outdoors can have the same—or even more dramatic—impact inside. Annuals offer an abundance of quick, bright options for bouquets but here the focus is on perennials or other plants that come back year after year, summer after summer. **FILLERS** to hold up more delicate flowers include hosta leaves which have a long “vase-life” and come in greens from blue to chartreuse to variegated. Coral bells, brunnera and lady’s mantle are other good backdrops for more colorful partners. Even apartment-dwellers usually have access to hosta leaves, a blossom and grass seedheads. **GRASSES** offer extremely long-lasting seedheads and blades of foliage to complement any arrangement. **VINES.** As a contrast to the vertical lines of grasses, add the fluid curves of grape vine, clematis, bittersweet or Virginia creeper. The arched stems of Solomon’s seal have arching spring blossoms followed by purple berries mid-summer. **WOODY CUTS:** Foliage from some trees and shrubs wilts immediately upon cutting so it takes some experimentation, but here’s some options:

- Camellia
- Deutzia
- Dogwood
- Forsythia
- Fruit Trees
- Hibiscus
- Hydrangea (to dry blossoms, wait till they begin to fade and dry out in mid-fall. Then cut the blossoms, remove foliage, and hang them upside down in a cool place. The colors soften to muted greens, blues and pinks, and last for years)
- Lilac
- Redbud
- Viburnum
- Willow
- Witch Hazel

**PERENNIALS:**

- Allium
- Aster
- Astilbe
- Baby’s Breath
- Balloon Flower
- Bee Balm
- Bellflower
- Black-Eyed Susan
- Blazing Star
- Coneflower
- Coreopsis
- Daisy
- Goldenrod
- Lavender
- Lily
- Penstemon
- Phlox
- Salvia
- Sedum
- Sunflower
- Toad Lily
- Turtlehead
- Yarrow

Tall Plants for the Back Border

Plant height can vary greatly by site, soil, exposure and other factors, but the plants listed below will most likely grow higher than 3 feet.

**GRASSES, perennial**

- Andropogon, 60”
- Calamagrostis, 42-60”
- Cyperus papyrus, 7”
- Eragrostis trichodes, 36”
- Miscanthus sinensis var. purpurascens, 36-48”
- Panicum virgatum ‘Dallas Blues’ & ‘Prairie Fire’, 24-48”
- Schizachyrium scoparium ‘MinnBlueA’, 24-48”
- Sorghastrum nutans ‘Indian Steel’, 42”
- Spodiopogon sibiricus, 36”

**HERBS**

- Artemisia annua, 60”
- Coriandrum sativum, 36”
- Eucalyptus citriodora, 6 ft.
- Foeniculum vulgare ‘Dulce’, 60”
- Laurus nobilis, 36-96”
- Poliomintha longiflora, 36”
- Salvia elegans ‘Golden Delicious’ & ‘Honeydew’, 36-48”
- Stevia rebaudiana, 36”

**PERENNIALS, full sun**

- Acanthus, 36-48”
- Achillea ‘Coronation Gold’, 36-42”
- Alcea rosea, 30-72”
- Amorpha canescens
- Asclepias, 24-40”
- Aster laevis ‘Bluebird’, 36-48”
- Baptisia lactea, 36-48”
- Buddleja, 30-84”
- Caryopteris x clandonensis ‘First Choice’, 36”
- Centranthus ruber ‘Pretty Betsy’, 24-36”
- Cononcinium coelestinum ‘Blue’, 36”
- Echinacea angustifolia, 18-36”
- Echinacea pallidilla, 48”
- Eupatorium dubium ‘Little Joe’, 36-48”
- Fallopia aubertii ‘Lemon Lace’, 12 ft “
- Helenium ‘Rottgold’, 24-36”
- Helianthus ‘Lemon Queen’, 60”
- Hibiscus, 36-48”
- Ipomopsis aggregata, 48”
- Iris sibirica & spuria, 24-36”
- Kniphofia caulescens, 36”
- Liatris pycnostachyi, ‘Eureka’, 60”
- Liatris spicata ‘Floristan Violet’, 36”
- Paeonia, 24-36”
- Papaver orientale, 24-36”
- Parthenium integrifolium, 24-48”
- Penstemon, 24-36”
Philadelphus microphyllus, 24-30”
Phlox paniculata ‘Eva Cullum’, 36-48”
Ratibida columnifera & pinnata, 48”
Rudbeckia fulgida var. speciosa, 36”
Rudbeckia maxima, 5-7’
Salvia azurea ssp. pitcherii ‘Nekan’, 48”
Silene regia, 36-48”
Solidago ‘Fireworks’ & ‘Wichita Mountains’, 30-36”
Vernonia fäassiculata, 24-48”
Veronicastrum, 4-5’
PERENNIALS, part shade
Aconitum, 24-60”
Callicarpa dichotoma, 36-60”
Clematis vines 6+ ft.
Delphinium ‘Astolat’ & ‘King Arthur’, 30-72”
Filipendula rubra ‘Venusta’, 48-60”
Heptacodium miconioides, 15ft.
Ligularia stenocephala ‘The Rocket’, 48-60”
Lobelia cardinalis & ‘Blue Select’, 36-48”
Lonicera, 8 ft.
Monarda ‘Marshall’s Delight’, 36-48”
Weigela praeox ‘April Snow’, 6 ft.
PERENNIALS, shade
Actaea, 36-60”
Hosta ‘Blue Umbrellas’, ‘Earth Angel’ & ‘Sum and Substance’, 30-48”
Tricyrtyis, 24-36”