

Plants for a Cutting Garden

BENEFICIAL LANDSCAPES
Nebraska Statewide Arboretum

Most gardeners want to extend their gardens as far as possible. Patios, porches and large windows extend them to indoor and outdoor living areas. Another way to stretch them is to intentionally include a few plants in our landscapes that can be brought inside for bouquets and other arrangements.



After a long gray winter, spring flowers are some of our favorite cuts. Thankfully, early bloomers like daffodils and tulips are fairly long-lasting in vases. You can also encourage early blooms from shrubs like forsythia, willow, dogwood, redbud and deutzia by cutting branches and bringing them indoors. Later on in spring, lush and fragrant lilacs and peonies will beg to be brought indoors.

Flowers may be our first thought for cuts, but even the simplest flash of green can be noticeable indoors. For filler and to hold up more delicate flowers, hosta leaves are long-lasting and range in color from gray/blue to chartreuse to variegated. The vase-shaped stems of Solomon's seal are perfect for cuts all the way from spring, when blossoms hang below their arched stems, to mid-summer berries hanging in the same soft arc, and even into fall color.

The foliage from coralbells, brunnera and lady's mantle is appealing too, either alone or as a backdrop for more colorful partners. And you don't necessarily need a garden to bring some beauty in; even apartment-dwellers usually have access to ivy, periwinkle, wintercreeper or seedheads from grasses. The vertical seedheads and foliage of grasses can complement almost any arrangement and, for more fluid lines, you can add grape, clematis, bittersweet or other vines.

As spring progresses into summer, the options expand dramatically. Annuals are all about blooming. Pansies, tobacco plant (*Nicotiana*), cosmos, zinnia, lantana and many more are happy for the deadheading and do well as cuts. Mid-summer landscape plants for cutting include coneflower, alliums, blazing star, black-eyed Susan, beebalm, roses, salvia, pincushion flower, yarrow and coreopsis.

In fall, aster, sedum, goldenrod, sunflower and toad lily can be brought indoors to pay more attention to their amazingly complex flower structures. For drying, you can plant feverfew, amaranth, lavender, baby's breath and hydrangea. For seedheads, good selections include flue false indigo; poppy; Mexican hat coneflower and milkweed.

Almost without exception, the complex form and beauty of plants deserve more than a passing glance; and bringing them to eye level is one way to better enjoy them.

Karma Larsen, Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, plantnebraska.org

PHOTO: White flowers dangle from the arched branches of Solomon's seal in spring, to be followed by dark berries later in early autumn.