

Plants to Grow Confidence

BENEFICIAL LANDSCAPES

Sarah Buckley

If you want to learn how to garden, plants are the best teachers and the best way to start is to just go ahead and plant. Choose your space carefully, you will want to plant it where you will visit often and where you will enjoy working. Observation throughout the year is a good way to really understand plants and what they need.

Start small and buy enough plants to get the ground covered so weeds don't overwhelm you. Space your plants so that when they are mature they will be touching, or even overlapping a little, and covering the ground. In the meantime, use mulch to slow down weeds and keep the soil from drying out too quickly.

Your first garden doesn't need to be perfect, it needs to bloom, bring you joy and grow your confidence as a gardener. Don't worry about planting a picture perfect native garden, a brilliantly designed landscape or a knockout display of the newest and coolest plants on the market. Those can come later. Your first garden or two will be experiments while you learn how to select and care for different types of plants.

Here are some plants that we at the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum think are a good place to start. We chose these plants because we're confident that they'll make you confident. They'll be easy-to-establish, handle a little bit of neglect and generally be dependable through Nebraska's unpredictable winters and summers. They'll also create a great base for you to build on and add to as you become more experienced and ready to experiment further. Here's some confidence-boosting plants for new gardeners.

PERENNIALS

Aster or *Symphyotrichum* (sun)
Beebalm, *Monarda* (sun)
Black-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia* (sun)
Coneflower, *Echinacea* (sun)
Coreopsis (sun)
Daylily, *Hemerocallis* (part shade)
Golden Alexander, *Zizia* (part shade)
Hosta (shade)
Salvia (sun)
Sedum (sun)
Yarrow, *Achillea* (sun)

GRASSES

Blue grama, *Bouteloua gracilis*
Feather Reed Grass, *Calamagrostis*
Sedge or *Carex*, especially fox, Pennsylvania and palm
Switchgrass, *Panicum*

Meanwhile, for experienced gardeners and plant collectors wanting something new for their gardens, all the plants listed above plus 700 more will be available at the largest plant sale in the Midwest, Spring Affair April 26-27 in Lincoln. See full plant list at <https://plantnebraska.org/connect/events/spring-affair.html>

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CUTLINE: Golden alexander is a rarely used native with deep green foliage and bright yellow flowers May into June. It adapts to a wide range of soil types, sunshine and moisture and will slowly spread.

