



PLANTNEBRASKA

Curbside Plantings

plantnebraska.org

What's the biggest landscape challenge on your property? For many homeowners, it's that curbside strip of soil surrounded by asphalt, concrete or buildings—difficult to mow, almost impossible to water without runoff, possibly shaded for part of the day and exposed to hot sunlight other times. It has to withstand foot traffic, pet refuse and deicers from winter snow removal. It also needs to be accessible for water and sewer line maintenance and meet local street codes, which may greatly restrict plant height and spread.

Improve Curb Appeal

Besides the obvious rewards of transforming a boring, sun-beaten strip into a thing of beauty, curbside gardening offers some unexpected pleasures. In caring for it, you reclaim otherwise “wasted” space, visit more with neighbors and passersby and, if it's looking good, maybe even get compliments on the makeover. On a more financial level, curbsides are the first step toward curb appeal in terms of real estate value and in making the whole neighborhood more appealing.

Less Maintenance

It can take some time and care to manage it well, but with good planning it can require less maintenance in the future and be a gift to beneficial insects, songbirds, yourself and your neighbors. The soil in these spots was likely not rich in organic matter from the beginning and is often extremely compacted from foot traffic. Before planting or as new plants are placed, putting in a shovelful of good, rich hummus or compost will little by little loosen and enrich the soil here and give plants a better chance.

Give Prairie Plants a Try

What plants are up to the challenge? Prairie plants meet many of the challenges of tough locations since they're deep-rooted to better withstand drought, heat, wind, sun and difficult soils. Once established they need little mowing, watering or other inputs. It's a good place to practice the survival of the fittest, since if it's watered too frequently the plants that survive will be the ones that continue to need extra water. Once established, watering only once a month may be enough to keep plants from going dormant; and even if they go dormant, these tough plants are likely to come back.





PLANTNEBRASKA

Curbside Plantings

plantnebraska.org

Curbside Plants for Sun and Shade

Stay Short—Visibility is important for drivers passing by your streetside plantings, so steer clear of very tall plants like Joe Pye weed and some of the asters. You'll also want to keep plants from drooping too low over the sidewalk so pedestrians can walk by without getting tangled in stems and blooms. Low grasses like little bluestem, prairie dropseed and sideoats or blue grama can be intermingled with shorter prairie wildflowers in between to provide seasonal highlights. Consider short varieties of dwarf spiderwort, prairie smoke, salvia, ajuga, dead nettle, Missouri primrose, pasque flower, phlox, allium or purple poppy mallow.

Consider Salt Tolerance—Plants close to the street can get soaked in snow, slush and salty run-off. Good groundcovers that are tolerate of road salt include candytuft, sedum, coral bells and Artemisia.

If You Have an Intensely Hot Area—Low perennials for hot, dry areas include evening primrose; daylily; feverfew; yarrow; basket-of-gold; purple poppy mallow; prairie phlox; blanket flower; coreopsis; pasque flower; pussytoes; butterfly milkweed; curly or prairie onion; and aromatic or heath aster.

If You Have a Shady Curbside—Try woodland sedges, which are tough, long-lived and adapt to minimal sun and moisture. They're among the first plants to emerge in spring. After setting seed, they can be tidied up with a quick haircut and will send out a new flush of growth. Their fine texture combines well with spring bulbs or with drought-tolerant lower-growing versions of perennials like cranesbill, aster, goldenrod and other shade-tolerant species.



From left to right: pasqueflower (*Pulsatilla patens*), little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) and cranesbill (*Geranium maculatum*)

More plant and landscaping resources are available at plantnebraska.org.