July 2009

Simply Beautiful®

Ah, Summer…it's the season we look forward to. The season that gives us beautiful (hot!) weather and beautiful flowers that allow us to enjoy time in our garden.

While you are caring for your annuals and trying to enjoy every second you have with them before Jack Frost takes them away, you can also begin thinking about perennials. There always seems to be a space to plant a low-maintenance perennial that will brighten your garden year after year. Although many perennials have short bloom times, most have attractive foliage that will add interest to your yard without the flowers.

If there were such a thing as the "Best Perennials List," it would change based on different opinions and location. But there is little doubt that these perennial beauties adorn many gardens throughout North America – and perhaps you'll want to add them to your own backyard.

Daylilies (Hemerocallis)



One of the hardiest perennials, daylilies are perfect for hot and dry areas (which is why you always see them planted alongside streets and medians). They come in a variety of colors and bloom times, from early Summer to Fall. USDA Zone 3 to 10.



Coneflowers (Echinacea)

A prairie native, this perennial also serves as a great cut flower for indoor arrangements. Honeybees LOVE this flower, so you'll be providing them with a much-needed pollen source if you plant these in your garden. USDA Zone 3 to 9.

Perennial Sage (Salvia)



Simply Beautiful offers an excellent tender perennial salvia in Mystic Spires Blue. (A tender perennial is a plant that is considered a perennial, but does not grow well in cooler climates.) It's very heat and drought tolerant and works well in beds and planters. USDA Zone 7 to 10.



Hostas

Talk about hardy. These plants will thrive no matter the conditions – provided they are planted in the shade. Plus, there are so many varieties available in different colors, shapes, textures and heights that it may be harder to choose which Hosta to plant than the actual care of growing it! If you can't decide, plant a grouping of different types. USDA Zone 3 to 9.

Black-Eyed Susan (Rudbeckia)

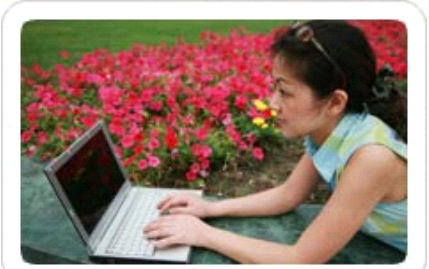


One of the many great things about this perennial is that it's easy to share; you can continue to divide it and give some to your neighbors and friends every year. One thing to remember about Black-Eyed Susan is it can be susceptible to powdery mildew, so be sure to water at the base of the plant and not above it. USDA Zone 3 to 10.

To Garden Is To Blog

As the green movement and vegetable trend continues to pick up speed, more and more

gardeners are sharing their thoughts via Internet blogs. People can find out what their fellow green thumbs are up to and get some inspirational ideas on plant care.



Many of the more popular gardening magazines feature blogs on their web sites, including Southern Living's "The Grumpy Gardener" and the "Better Blog" on Better Homes & Gardens' web site. BH&G also lists a few other gardening-related blogs created by editors and other experts that provide insight to the newest plant varieties and problems.

If you're ever looking for some answers to your gardening conundrums, visit the good old Internet and search for some blogs. You can get some free advice without a lot of effort and maybe meet some new flower-loving friends in your area.

What is your "Flower Palate"?



As with any hobby, most people don't jump right in – they have to test the waters first before making the plunge. This is true for most extracurricular activities, especially since most hobbies require some work and patience.

We've developed a way for you to find out what your "Flower Palate" is based on level of experience. Just like with wine tasting, we have suggestions on specific plant varieties that you can try as you expand your gardening M-O.

Visit the Garden Tips section of the Simply Beautiful web site to find out if you're a garden novice or a connoisseur and which plants will fit to your particular "tastes."