

Plants for Sunny Gardens (published 5/25/2024)

By Patty Neas, Master Gardener

Floriferous! That's what we want this summer, a sunny garden full of healthy plants with masses of colorful blooms that last from spring to frost. To have a floriferous garden, we need not only to consider choosing plants that grow well in full sun and part sun conditions, but we must consider soil characteristics and water needs. For floriferous plants we need healthy soil. Prepare your garden site each year based on soil test results and recommendations. Selecting plants that are lower maintenance and natives that are already adapted to our location will always be a best choice. Plant labels define the plant's growing needs. When investing in new plants, read the plant tags and carefully make your selections based on your soil type, location and space available.

Annuals are a good option for continuous blooms from spring to frost. Perennials come back in the same spot every year in your landscape. Adding annuals complements them, giving you the opportunity to place more color wherever it is needed. To achieve spring to frost blooms from your perennials, select new plants that have a long blooming period and those that will fill in color when other perennials are not blooming. You will find blooming times on plant labels.

Annuals for Sunny Gardens

Annuals add a boost of color to the garden, supplementing the features provided by perennials. Whether you sow seeds or purchase plants, here are some suggestions for low maintenance, pollinator-friendly annuals that will bloom until frost.

The hyacinth bean vine was Plant of the Month at the University of Tennessee Gardens in May 2023. Hummingbirds love this vine that climbs 25 ft. in a summer and blooms with rosy-purple flowers from June to frost. The shiny, dark purple seed pods are almost more beautiful than the blossoms. Be sure to save its seeds.

Tall verbena is an annual that self-seeds freely. Butterflies and hummingbirds visit the lavender blossoms from June to frost. It is a low maintenance plant that tolerates drought and poor soils.

Can you have a flower garden without zinnias? Zinnias bloom in almost every color. Sow the seeds in full sun and succession plant ever 2-3 weeks until the end of June for long season blooms and cut flowers. Harvest the seeds for next year.

New Guinea impatiens can grow in full sun but prefers partial shade. Everyone loves petunias for their masses of color. *Calibrachoa* or million bells is great for hanging baskets. Sunflowers are natives and make quite a show in cut flower arrangements. Look for other annuals such as sweet alyssum, *Calendula*, *Salvia* and *Lantana*.

Perennials for Sunny Gardens

To get more bang for your buck, consider using perennials for your gardens. From early spring through late fall, perennials can produce colorful flowers for your gardens. Late summer and fall blooming perennials fill in the end-of-season gap. Pollinators need the continued nectar, and our gardens need the color!

First, we think of asters that bloom September to November. Aromatic aster, a native plant, presents us with daisy-like blue/purple blooms loved by pollinators!

Russian sage is a large but airy plant lined with light blue flowers growing along its tall, full branches. It blooms from July to October and tolerates clay soils and drought. Rabbits and deer are repelled by its scented gray-green leaves.

Brown-eyed Susan, *Rudbeckia triloba*, a tall native plant, blooms July through October. Full of small yellow daisy-like flowers, it self-sows and is a drought-tolerant, deer-resistant, and pollinator-friendly. Catmint blooms from April to September and is tolerant of dry soil, deer and rabbits. Giant goldenrod was UT Gardens plant of the month of September 2023. Goldenrod has beautiful golden color for the fall. It is this native plant that is wrongly accused of allergies caused by ragweed. <https://utgardens.tennessee.edu/grow-on-the-wild-side-with-goldenrod/>

Yarrow, Joe Pye weed and feverfew bloom into September. Butterfly weed, bee balm, and coreopsis all bloom in July and August. Other summer blooming perennials are shasta daisies, black-eyed-Susan and coneflowers.

So many sun-loving, flowering plants, so little space in this article! For further information on these plants and others, use the educational publications below.

We love the summer sun and so do these plants. The birds, bees and butterflies love them too. Plant, enjoy and share. May your garden be floriferous from spring till frost! Happy gardening!

Resources

“Landscaping with Native Plants – East Tennessee,”

<https://www.hamiltontn.gov/PDF/WaterQuality/bmps/11.1.pdf>

“Tennessee Smart Yards – Native Plants,” <https://tnyards.utk.edu/category/native-plants/>

“Growing Perennials,” <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/growing-perennials/>

“Annuals and Biennials for Tennessee Landscapes,” <https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/12/W874A.pdf>

“Perennials for Tennessee Landscapes,” https://plantsciences.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2021/11/Plants-for-Tennessee-landscapes_Perennials-UT-Publication-W874-B.pdf

How do I ask a question?

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