



Ground Covers for Arizona Landscapes

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Ground covers are usually creeping, sprawling or clumping plants whose primary function is to cover the ground in man-made landscapes. They can also include low growing shrubs and perennials, if they spread to cover the area. Plants suitable for this use come in a wide range of shapes, sizes, textures and colors. Many bear attractive flowers that add seasonal beauty to their other good characteristics.

Why Use a Ground Cover?

Ground covers fill a number of important design needs. They can form a low horizontal foliage mass that serves to organize or tie a planting together into a unified composition. They can soften and add a touch of greenery to the large rock-mulched areas so often seen in desert landscapes. Large expanses of paving also seem cooler and more interesting if beds of ground covers are occasionally substituted for sections of pavement. They cut glare, suppress dust, and prevent evaporative water loss. Ground covers are effective alone or in mixed plantings near one-story houses, surrounding tall office buildings, defining open spaces, and covering highway embankments.

From an engineering standpoint, ground covers that root along the ground as they grow can control erosion on steep slopes. They can also reduce the need for mowing turf on small or odd-shaped areas or on difficult banks or mounds. Because ground covers differ in the amount of foot traffic they tolerate without injury, they can direct pedestrian traffic around an area rather than inviting it as turf often does.

Caveats

Ground covers are rarely maintenance-free, however. Gardeners who are unfamiliar with the general growth characteristics of ground covers may expect these plants to provide a permanent foliage cover once the planting has filled in. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Within two to four years many ground cover beds will develop bare spots or areas of sparse open foliage. This may be due to weather, cultural practices, pests or the gradual change from vigorous young leafy plants to older tougher less densely foliated plants.

As a result, most ground cover plantings do require regular care and refurbishing to keep them dense and vigorous. In addition to proper irrigation, fertilization, and pest control, this may involve replanting bare spots and pruning old stems to stimulate new growth. Nevertheless, some experts feel that 5 years is the maximum life span of a groundcover in the lower Sonoran Desert areas (Phoenix, Yuma, etc).

How to Select a Ground Cover

Three basic questions should be considered when selecting a ground cover:

- Will this plant create the desired landscape effect? (Consider mature height, growth habit and growth rate, texture, color, bloom period, year-round appearance, etc.)
- Will this plant grow well on the site? (Consider soil type, topography, soil and air drainage, light exposure, seasonal high and low temperatures.)
- Will this plant make an attractive ground cover with the maintenance I can provide? (Consider irrigation and fertilization requirements, pruning, cleaning, pest control, life span and replacement needs.)

The following tables list some of the most useful ground cover species for southern Arizona as well as their landscape uses and cultural requirements. Several precautions should be observed in selecting plants from this list.

- Do not choose rampant growing types like Honeysuckle or Algerian Ivy for small or narrow spaces.
- Do not choose a high-maintenance type where low maintenance is desired.
- Do not assume that edgers and weed eaters will keep a vigorous species in bounds.
- Use types under trees that can absorb tree leaves without the need for raking.
- For erosion control purposes, select ground covers that root as they spread since these are more effective than mat-forming sorts.

Other important considerations include the following: Does the species tends to attract trash or debris (by means of thorns or spines or shaggy bark)? Will other plants on the site need care (pruning, etc) with which the ground cover will interfere?

Many ground covers have an off-season for growth and appearance. Since they are frequently used in a prominent position in the foreground, it is best to select the toughest plant available that looks attractive for the longest period. Whenever possible, select a ground cover that is frost-hardy in your area or at least a species that recovers quickly from cold injury. Note the discussion of the plant hardiness zones, and see the attached Arizona map.

General Planting instructions

The best planting times are mid-fall and early spring. Plants set out in either season will develop a good root system before the stress of hot summer weather.

Ground covers are often used in areas where growing conditions are less than ideal. They may be planted on steep dry slopes in full sun or deep shade. In addition, most types grow close to the ground where they are exposed to a microclimate of exaggerated heat or cold. This makes good soil preparation important to plant establishment and growth.

Soil preparation

Start bed preparation a week or so before you plan to plant. It is not necessary to add soil amendments if you've chosen a species that is adapted to alkaline soils and relatively low fertility. Do work the soil to a depth of 12", removing caliche, rocks or debris.

Plan to mulch the area after planting with 3" of bark (which will eventually break down and improve soil structure and nutrition) or 1-2" of decomposed granite. Water the cleaned bed to a depth of 12" several days before planting.

Space ground cover plants in a new bed so that they will cover the site in one or two growing seasons, and yet have room to expand to full size. Closer spacing can reduce weed control problems and usually results in a smoother cover, but by the third year, the plants may be overcrowded.

Set the plants at the same depth as they were growing in the container and firm backfill soil around the roots without crushing the rootball. On banks and slopes, plant slightly higher than grade, leaving a shallow basin on the downhill side of each plant to catch irrigation/rain water.

In the mid to low desert parts of Arizona, bermudagrass is a prime cause of failure in planting and maintaining ground cover beds. It is not impossible to control if the bed can be kept clean until a solid planting exists. Bermudagrass is less likely to invade once ground covers fill in the bare spaces between plants. Chemical herbicides are available for establishing a relatively weed-free planting site. (In most cases however, two or more treatments must be made during summer to rid an area of existing bermudagrass. This must be considered in deciding when to set out a new bed in a bermudagrass area. More information under "Weeding.")

Watering the new plants

Tender young ground cover nursery stock dies quickly if allowed to dry out on the planting site. It is important that plants be watered thoroughly a short time before being removed from growing containers and placed in the ground. Irrigate the cultivated bed area several days before planting so that the transplants will be set out in moist soil. Since it may take several hours or

longer to complete the planting operation, the first plants set out may be dry before the job is finished, especially on a warm, windy day. To prevent such losses, stop at regular intervals to water transplants. A mulch of coarse bark, wood chips, or other mulch materials over the finished bed will keep the ground cooler, conserve moisture and discourage weeds.

Young ground cover plants are shallow rooted and may need watering every 2 or 3 days for the first two to four weeks after planting. When established, the same plants may require watering every 5 to 10 days in hot dry weather, but only every 3 to 6 weeks in the winter if natural precipitation has been less than normal.

Care of Established Plantings

Irrigation

Many gardeners attempt to establish dense ground cover plantings in desert landscapes that receive little or no irrigation. This is nearly impossible to accomplish, even with drought-tolerant species. The nature of the desert is such that vegetation is scattered with areas of open ground in between. Low water-use ground covers will assume a similar growth pattern if they must survive and grow with natural precipitation only. So supplemental irrigation is required for a solid foliage cover even with arid plant types.

There are several irrigation systems that will work efficiently to provide water to a ground cover bed that's level or on a slight incline. Soaker hoses, drip irrigation, or micro-sprays will keep the water near the soil level — not on the foliage. Whatever the system used, apply water only as rapidly as the soil will absorb it. It may be necessary to irrigate for several brief periods with time between each cycle to moisten the entire root zone without wasteful surface run-off. The watering schedule should be separate from the turf schedule.

Watering ground covers on slopes often includes surface run-off and poor infiltration of moisture to the depth of plant roots. A drip irrigation system is perhaps the most efficient way to water ground covers on slopes.

Weeding

Bermudagrass often invades ground cover beds in summer when outdoor gardening activity is reduced. Once well-established, this aggressive grass is difficult to eradicate without also destroying part or all of the ground cover. Removing even small infestations from tender brittle ground cover species is impractical because of the difficulty in getting out on the bed without damaging plants. This is why it is so important to eliminate bermudagrass before planting a new bed. There are several chemical means to control grasses in broadleaf groundcover beds. Mulch at least 2" deep will help slow down grass invasion. Check established plantings regularly for the appearance of bermudagrass and take immediate steps to get rid of any that is found.

Fertilizing

Since ground cover plants grow in close competition for nutrients, they should be fertilized regularly to maintain good leaf color, yet moderate growth. Overfertilization results in excessive growth that requires more work to maintain and keep presentable. Fertilize established ground cover planting at least once each year in late winter or early spring. A second application in early fall may be needed to maintain good color and growth, though the resultant lush growth is more susceptible to frost damage.

Nitrogen is usually the key element which must be supplied. The percent by weight of nitrogen in a fertilizer is indicated by the first number in the analysis, such as 20-10-5, 16-20-0, etc. This information is printed somewhere on the fertilizer bag. A typical fertilizer recommendation for mature ground covers is two pounds of ammonium sulfate (21-0-0) or other garden fertilizer of similar nitrogen content per 100 square feet. Apply the fertilizer uniformly when the foliage is dry. Then water thoroughly to wash off any fertilizer particles lodged in the plant foliage and to move the nutrients into the plant root zone.

Pruning and Deadheading

Ground covers are generally more attractive if pruned back each year in late winter or early spring. Wait till danger of frost is over before cutting back tender species. The appearance of the planting will usually serve as a guide for scheduling pruning work. To encourage a ground cover bed to recover quickly fertilize and irrigate after pruning is done.

Rapid-growing types may need trimming two or three times during the growing season. The need for artificially shearing a planting can be an indication of the wrong plant in the wrong place! If a plant continues to over-run a sidewalk area, remove it and allow more space for neighboring plants, rather than repeatedly edging the offending plant.

Flowering species will continue to bloom if the spent flowers or seed pods are removed. This procedure is called deadheading. In other cases, the flowers or fruits could attract wildlife that may invade the bed. Although this deadheading chore can be difficult and time-consuming, ground cover growth and vigor will be improved.

Explanation of cultural requirements used in the ground cover tables:

Water

Heavy – Plants thrive in or adjoining lawn conditions which infers that upper root zone is kept moderately moist at all times.

Medium – Plants thrive with deep irrigations spaced 7-14 days apart depending on season and type. Surface layer of soil may dry out but adequate moisture levels are always maintained in deeper root zones.

Light – Plants tolerate long dry periods but must be watered deeply on an occasional basis to grow or develop. This group includes most of the true desert trees and shrubs. Poor drainage often causes problems for these plants.

Exposure

Shade – Area receives no direct sunlight such as under a roof or dense tree canopy. There is a range between deep shade such as under a solid roof and open shade - for example the situation found on the shadow side of a tall building where the sun never penetrates and yet there is open sky above.

Partial shade – Situation under trees where there is a dappled sun and shade light pattern or a situation where there are a few hours of sunlight early or late in the day. Late afternoon sun is more intense and is usually accompanied by a heat build-up. Plant requiring part shade often do not thrive in such a situation.

Full sun – Area receives direct unobstructed sunlight for more than a half of a day. There is a range between direct sun and reflected sun where planting areas close to walls facing south or west are much hotter. These situations may limit the use of certain plants which are sensitive to reflected heat.

Plant Climate (Hardiness) Zones

In the following plant descriptions, three climate zones are used to give some idea of species adaptation based on cold hardiness. Communities in each zone might vary slightly from one another. Plants considered marginal for the zone seldom survive in the cooler sites except in very protected locations. Within the zone, those communities with milder climates allow the marginal plants to be grown with reasonable success. Remember too, that these climate zones grade into one another near their boundaries, with a corresponding effect on plant-performance.

Experienced desert gardeners know that microclimate effects (elevation, exposure, air drainage, heat radiation from buildings and paving, etc.) can create a significantly cooler or warmer environment for plants. The microclimates found within your own landscape may determine whether or not you can grow a given tree or shrub in a particular location.

Zone 3

High Altitude Desert – (Elevation 3,500-5,000 feet) (typical minimums: 0 to 10° F) Point-of-reference communities: Benson, Bisbee, Clifton, Douglas, Globe, Kingman, Natural Bridge, Nogales, Sedona, Sierra Vista, Tombstone.

Zone 4:

Mid-Altitude Desert – (Elevation 2,000-3,500 feet) (typical minimums: 10 to 20° F) Point-of-reference communities: Ajo, Safford, Tucson, Wickenberg.

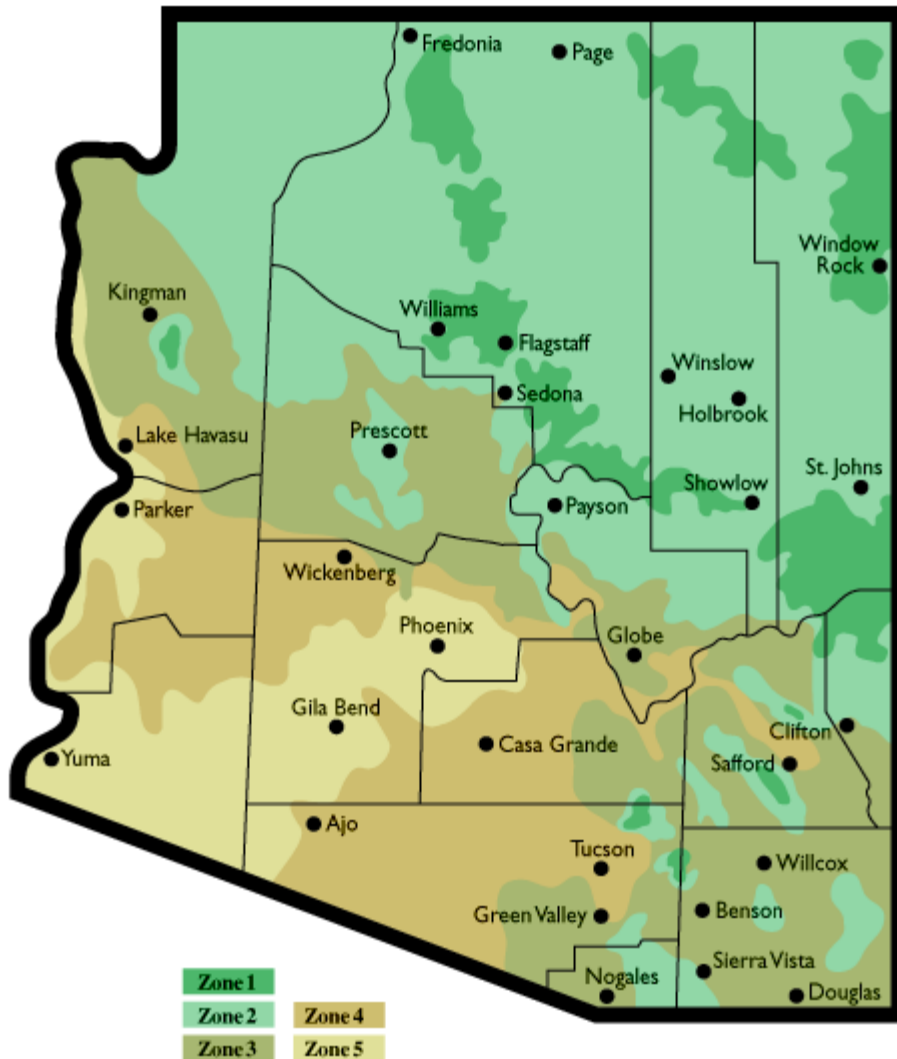
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

























Low Altitude Desert – (Elevation 1,000-2,000 feet) (typical minimums: 20 to 30° F) Point-of-reference communities: Buckeye, Casa Grande, Chandler, Florence, Gila Bend, Parker, Phoenix, Yuma.





























X = Hardy




























M = Marginal but recovers quickly from frost injury


































Arizona Plant Climate Zones
























































Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<p><i>Acacia redolens</i> PROSTRATE ACACIA</p> <p>Low growing, prostrate arching shrub with dull gray-green foliage. Yellow puff-ball flowers in spring.</p>	Erosion control on slopes, level areas	Cultivars vary widely in height. Can collect trash	1-3'	Fast	5'-8'	4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Ajuga reptans</i> CARPET BUGLE</p> <p>Shiny green or copper foliage; erect spikes of deep blue blossoms in spring.</p>	Small spaces in partial sun or shady nooks, mini-oasis in Zone 4	Not a sun lover in the desert. Subject to root knot nematodes, fungus where drainage is poor. Shallow rooted, requires regular watering.	1'	Slow	1'	3X, 4X	 	  
<p><i>Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprengeri'</i> SPRENGER ASPARAGUS</p> <p>Arching trailing stems. Light green needle-like foliage, red berries.</p>	Level areas, low banks, planter boxes, hanging pots	Partial shade, chlorotic in full sun near lawns; for lush green growth can be cut to ground in early spring or after freezing.	1' - 2'	Medium	2'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	  
<p><i>Atriplex semibaccata</i> AUSTRALIAN SALTBUSH</p> <p>Dense, low-growing shrub with grey-green foliage</p>	Desert shrub and ground cover	Fire resistant, erosion control. Stands alkaline soil; reseeds or naturalizes. Prone to fungus in dense mature plantings.	1' - 2'	Slow	3' - 4'	4X, 5X	  	
<p><i>Carpobrotus, Drosanthemum, Malephora, others</i> ICE PLANT</p> <p>Trailing succulent stems; fleshy green-grey leaves; orange, yellow or red daisy-like flowers in spring and summer.</p>	Sunny slopes, mounds and beds	Well drained soil; drought resistant but may freeze back in very cold winter (Zone 3) or dry down in summer heat (Zone 5). No traffic. Bermuda invasions can be a problem	< 1'	Medium to fast	1'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Baccharis x 'Centennial'</i> DESERT BROOM HYBRID</p> <p>Dense, ground hugging green-grey foliage</p>	Fairly dry areas; beds, slopes, desert landscapes	Prune once a year; subject to damping off in late summer. Allow to dry between summer irrigations.	2-3 ft	Medium	3-4'	4X, 5X	  	




























Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<i>Baileya multiradiata</i> DESERT MARIGOLD Soft, silvery grey foliage in a clump, bright yellow blossoms in spring	Colorful desert annual. Use in naturalized areas.	Long bloom period. Reseeds itself but will not make a solid cover	1'	Medium	scatter seeds	3X, 4X, 5X	  	  
<i>Calylophus hartwegii</i> CALYLOPHUS, SUN DROPS Many unbranched stems; low growing, yellow flowers at sunset in spring, summer. Spreads by rhizomes.	Small beds w/ shrubs and cacti	Dormant in winter in colder areas. Good drainage a must.	1'	Medium	3-4'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	  
<i>Convolvulus mauritanicus</i> GROUND MORNING GLORY Low mounded mass of soft green-grey foliage; lavender blue trumpet shaped flowers, spring to early fall.	Small beds, slopes	Tolerates dry, poor soil, needs good drainage. Do not overwater! Cut back if it becomes too straggly. Blooms over a long season, though is rarely long-lived.	1'	Fast	3'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	  
<i>Convolvulus cneorum</i> BUSH MORNING GLORY Low mounding bush with silvery foliage, white flowers w/ yellow centers bloom spring and fall.	Small beds, slopes	Tolerates dry, poor soil, needs good drainage.	2'	Medium	4'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	  
<i>Cotoneaster glaucophyllus</i> BRIGHT BEAD COTONEASTER Erect, arching growth; oval, green-grey foliage; flowers are pink followed by many red fruits.	Planter boxes and beds, where a low shrub mass is needed, low borders and slopes	Tolerates heat and drought, but needs protection from worst sun in Zone 5; Texas root rot a problem, particularly if planter is small and heats up.	3'	Medium	3'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	 
<i>Dalea greggii</i> TRAILING INDIGO BUSH Mounding low shrub. Graceful arching stems, soft gray foliage. Lavender flowers in spring.		Spreads rapidly where stems contact ground.	1.5'	Fast	4' - 5'	4X, 5X	 	

Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<p><i>Dalea capitata</i> GOLD DALEA</p> <p>Low mounding form, fine dark green leaves with lemony scent, yellow flowers in fall.</p>	Slopes, beds with shrubs	Needs good drainage. Not for deep shade. Takes reflected heat.	1'-2'	fast	4'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Euonymus fortunei 'Colorata'</i> PURPLE LEAF WINTERCREEPER</p> <p>Mounding vine, dark green foliage; foliage turning reddish purple in winter</p>	Large beds and slopes, good to naturalize among boulders; will climb masonry walls	Foliage a little sparse in winter (Zone 3). Sensitive to full sun in low desert summers. No foot traffic. Subject to Texas Root Rot.	2'	Fast	4'	3X, 4X	  	  
<p><i>Gazania hybrids</i> CLUMPING GAZANIA</p> <p>Herbaceous perennial, grey-green foliage in rosettes or clumps. 2" daisy-like flowers in a variety of colors, mostly spring and fall.</p>	Sunny beds and borders, gentle slopes	May need some refurbishing replacement every fall; Prone to fungus.	1'	Fast	1.5'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Gazania rigens leucolaena</i> TRAILING GAZANIA</p> <p>Gray creeping perennial; daisy-like flowers, white, yellow, orange, and bronze blossoms spring and fall.</p>	Level beds and banks	Needs good soil drainage; subject to damping off in late summer. Mature plantings should be thinned annually.	1'	Fast	2'	4M, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i> CAROLINA JESSAMINE</p> <p>Twining woody vine; dark green foliage; fragrant tubular yellow flowers spring through fall.</p>	Good in large areas.	Long and sprawling stems, makes better cover if pegged down; may crawl over shrubs, subject to chlorosis in wet places.	2' - 3'	medium	4' - 6'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	  
<p><i>Hedera canariensis</i> ALGERIAN IVY</p> <p>Long runners; large, rich green leaves, variegated forms available</p>	Grows well in large areas; will cover walls & fences	Not a great choice. Burns out in full sun. Needs fertile well drained soils. Will damp off in heat.	1'	Medium to fast	2'	3X, 4X, 5X		 

Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<p><i>Hymenoxys acaulis</i> ANGELITA DAISY</p> <p>Small clumping gray-green pine-like foliage, yellow flowers</p>	Small areas, borders	Good for open spaces, transition zone in Xeriscapes. Blooms nearly continuously. Needs deadheading	1'	Fast	2 - 3'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	  
<p><i>Juniperus sp.</i> (Many species and cultivars) PROSTRATE JUNIPER</p> <p>Flat, prostrate or mounded growth habit depending on variety; dark to light blue-green foliage</p>	Banks, edging, beds, planter boxes	Low types more vulnerable to Bermuda invasion. Do not use in small areas where edges must be excessively pruned — spoils its natural form. Likes to be washed off regularly, helps eliminate spider mite problems. Prone to sun damage in exposed locations Zone 5.	2' - 3'	Medium	3' - 5'	3X, 4X	 	   
<p><i>Lantana montevidensis</i> TRAILING LANTANA</p> <p>Arching trailing branches; lavender flowers, clusters over long period</p>	Flat areas or slopes	Leaves die back 30 degrees F; stems hardier; may give color all winter in a protected location. Cut back in early spring. Responds well to iron.	1'	Medium to fast	2'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Lantana camara</i> (several yellow and white cultivars) GOLD LANTANA</p> <p>Prostrate form of bush lantana; horizontal stems, brilliant yellow flowers blooming intermittently spring through fall.</p>	Flat areas or slopes	Hardier than trailing lantana, but enjoys severe pruning as growth starts in spring.	1' - 2'	Medium to fast	3' - 4'	4X, 5X	 	  
<p><i>Liriope spicata</i> CREeping LILY TURF</p> <p>Dense, grass-like ground cover; pale lilac-white flower; spikes barely taller than leaves.</p>	Part shade or mini-oasis area.	Not a great choice since leaf tips often turn brown in salty soil or with low relative humidity.	1'	Medium	2'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	  
<p><i>Lonicera japonica 'Halliana'</i> JAPANESE HONEYSUCKLE</p> <p>Evergreen vine; fragrant tubular flowers, white changing to yellow in spring and summer</p>	Loose billowy cover for banks and steep slopes; roots in as it spreads—good cover on wire fences	Can climb nearby trees and shrubs creating a maintenance problem.	1-3'	Fast	2-3'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	   

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<p><i>Melampodium leucanthum</i> BLACK FOOT DAISY</p> <p>Spreading, low growing clump. White daisy-like flower bloom intermittently spring through fall.</p>	Low-growing wildflower look in arid or transition zones.	Semi-perennial—needs replacing from time to time	1'	Medium	2'- 3'	4X, 5X	 	
<p><i>Myoporum parvifolium</i> MYOPORUM</p> <p>Spreading, low growing; rich green foliage w/ small white flowers.</p>	Slight slopes, large open areas.	No foot traffic. Do not crowd plants. Rarely roots on contact with soil.	1'	Fast	5' - 6'	4X, 5X		  
<p><i>Oenothera speciosa</i> MEXICAN EVENING PRIMROSE</p> <p>During spring bloom bears a profusion of rose-pink 1.5" flowers, which close after dark.</p>	Good for dry slopes; parking strips	Perennial which needs little care once established. Invasive if not controlled; has underground runners; cut back to ground early spring and cut back again after bloom. Needs good drainage. Flea beetles can be problem.	1'	Fast	2'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	  
<p><i>Oenothera caespitosa</i> WHITE EVENING PRIMROSE</p> <p>Dark green leaves in rosettes; exceptionally large white flowers that bloom at dusk, spring through fall.</p>	Good for dry slopes; parking strips, smaller beds under shrubs	May be short lived, but spreads by seed. Watch for flea beetles.	1'	Fast	1.5'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	  
<p><i>Oenothera stubbei</i> SALTILLO EVENING PRIMROSE</p> <p>Rosettes of bright green leaves; 2" yellow flowers bloom spring through fall.</p>	Good for dry slopes; parking strips, smaller beds under shrubs	Spreads by above ground runner. Needs afternoon shade. May be cut back after winter.	1'	Fast	3'	4X, 5X	   	 
<p><i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i> MONDO GRASS</p> <p>Clumps of dark green foliage in mounds; lilac blossoms, blue fruit—concealed by foliage</p>	Good in poorly lit atriums; good around boulders, in a shady protected spot or mini-oasis.	Somewhat oriental in appearance, slow to fill in, leaf tips often turn brown in salty soil.	1'	Slow	1'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	 

Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<i>Osteospermum fruticosum</i> TRAILING AFRICAN DAISY Long runners, light green fleshy leaves, 3" daisy-like blossoms	Sunny areas, sloping bank cover, also hanging baskets	Prune back in late winter if leggy; pinch to encourage branching; purple form is hardier than white hybrid 'African Queen'; dies out in spots. Replant bare spots spring or fall.	1'	Fast	2'-3'	4X, 5X	 	   
<i>Rosmarinus prostratus</i> DWARF ROSEMARY Arching, creeping stems; dark green narrow leaves; small blue flowers in winter and spring	Sunny banks, slopes and planters	Good transition from desert to cultivated plants; must be pruned regularly to prevent woodiness. Prevent Bermuda invasion. Spittle bugs can be problem.	1-2'	Fast	2' - 3'	3X, 4X, 5X	 	 
<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i> SANTOLINA Dense mat of fine textured green-grey foliage; yellow button-like blossoms in summer	Low border or ground cover, small areas	Good desert transition. Prune to prevent woodiness; summer—prune to prevent seed heads	1' - 2'	Medium	2' - 3'	3X, 4X, 5X		 
<i>Santolina virens</i> GREEN SANTOLINA Mounding, dense green foliage; flowers in the summer	Low borders or ground cover; small areas	Striking texture and color; replace if woody	1' - 2'	Medium	2'	3X, 4X, 5X		
<i>Sedum sp. (Many)</i> SEDUM, STONECROP Mostly creeping plants with thick succulent leaves; small blossoms of various colors but mostly yellow	Small beds, low banks and mounds	Many kinds available. Bird and rodents a problem. Hard to weed because plant is brittle and succulent leaves crush underfoot. Needs part shade in low desert (Zone 5)	1'	Medium to fast	1'-2'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	 
<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i> 'Prostratum' PROSTRATE GERMANDER Dense dark green foliage, spreads by stolons; rose-purple flowers in summer	Compact edging or ground cover; good with stones and railroad ties	Takes sun, heat, poor soil; soil must drain well; cut back in late winter to renew growth	1'	Medium	1' - 2'	3M, 4X, 5X	  	 

Plant name and description	Uses	Comments	Height	Growth rate	Planting distance	Hardiness zones	Light exposure	Water
<p><i>Trachelospermum jasminoides</i> STAR JASMINE</p> <p>Loose mounding vine; shiny dark-green foliage; fragrant 1" white flowers in spring</p>	Informal beds, planter boxes	Afternoon shade required below 2000' elevation; will climb nearby shrubs and trees; slow to establish from small liners; chlorotic in poorly drained soils.	1' - 2'	Medium	2'	3M, 4X, 5X	  	  
<p><i>Verbena peruviana</i> PERUVIAN VERBENA</p> <p>Ground-hugging, dark green foliage; flowers pink to white, bloom spring to fall.</p>	Bed, borders, planters	Hybrids available in several colors; long blooming season.	<1'	Fast	2'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	
<p><i>Verbena gooddingii</i> GOODING'S VERBENA</p> <p>Soft green foliage, masses of lavender flowers in spring.</p>	Bed, borders, planters	Needs extra water in summer. Short lived.	1'	Medium	2'	3X, 4X, 5X		 
<p><i>Verbena rigida</i> SANDPAPER VERBENA</p> <p>Upright, stiff rough foliage; dark purple flowers in spring.</p>	Bed, borders, planters	Spreads by seed, can become invasive	1'	Fast	3'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	 
<p><i>Vinca major</i> BLUE PERIWINKLE</p> <p>Trailing stem; shiny dark-green foliage; lavender-blue flowers in spring</p>	Slopes, banks, level areas; planter boxes; under trees	May be sheared late in winter; a variegated form is available. Chlorotic in full sun with heavy irrigation.	1'	Fast	1'	3X, 4X, 5X	  	  
<p><i>Wedelia trilobata</i> WEDELIA</p> <p>Dark green foliage on flexible stems that root where they contact the soil; yellow daisy-like flowers bloom spring through fall.</p>	Shady beds, mini-oasis areas. Needs room to spread.	Not for full sun in desert (Zones 4, 5). Rampant growth if conditions are right.	1'	Fast	2' - 3'	3M, 4X, 5X	 	  

Groundcovers in the table are arranged alphabetically by scientific name. Following are the equivalent Latin names for the common name that may be more familiar:

Algerian ivy	<i>Hedera canariensis</i>
Angelita daisy	<i>Hymenoxys acaulis</i>
Australian saltbush	<i>Atriplex semibaccata</i>
Bush morning glory	<i>Convolvulus cneorum</i>
Black foot daisy	<i>Melampodium leucanthum</i>
Blue periwinkle	<i>Vinca major</i>
Bright bead cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster glaucophyllus</i>
Carolina jessamine	<i>Gelsemium sempervirens</i>
Carpet bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
Clumping gazania	<i>Gazania hybrids</i>
Creeping lily turf	<i>Liriope spicata</i>
Desert broom hybrid	<i>Baccharis x 'Centennial'</i>
Desert marigold	<i>Baileya multiradiata</i>
Dwarf rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus prostratus</i>
Gold dalea	<i>Dalea capitata</i>
Gold lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>
Gooding's verbena	<i>Verbena goodingii</i>
Green santolina	<i>Santolina virens</i>
Ground morning glory	<i>Convolvulus mauritanicus</i>
Ice plant	<i>Carpobrotus, etc.</i>
Japanese honeysuckle	<i>Lonicera japonica 'Halliana'</i>
Mexican evening primrose	<i>Oenothera speciosa</i>
Mondo grass	<i>Ophiopogon japonicus</i>
Myoporum	<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>
Peruvian verbena	<i>Verbena peruviana</i>
Prostrate acacia	<i>Acacia redolens</i>
Prostrate Juniper	<i>Juniperus</i>
Prostrate Germander	<i>Teucrium chamaedrys 'Prostratum'</i>
Purple leaf wintercreeper	<i>Euonymus fortunei 'Colorata'</i>
Saltillo evening primrose	<i>Oenothera stubbei</i>
Sandpaper verbena	<i>Verbena rigida</i>
Santolina	<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i>
Sedum, Stonecrop	<i>Sedum</i>
Sprenger asparagus	<i>Asparagus densiflorus 'Sprenger'</i>
Sundrops, Calylophus	<i>Calylophus hartwegii</i>
Trailing indigo bush	<i>Dalea greggii</i>
Trailing gazania	<i>Gazania rigens leucolaena</i>
Trailing lantana	<i>Lantana montevidensis</i>
Trailing African daisy	<i>Osteospermum fruticosum</i>
Wedelia	<i>Wedelia trilobata</i>
White evening primrose	<i>Oenothera caespitosa</i>