

Not a Drop to Spare?

HERE'S 25 PERENNIALS PROVEN TO BE
DROUGHT TOLERANT



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Agastache (ANISE HYSSOP)

This is a great plant for hot, dry, sunny climates. Well-drained soil is a must, especially in the winter. This plant will not tolerate heavy clay soil but grows well in average to light soil with low to medium moisture levels. In the sandy soil of our zone 5b trial garden, this variety has overwintered with flying colors. Even so, it's officially listed as a zone 6 perennial so some winter protection might be required in your zone. No serious pest or disease problems have been reported with this plant.



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Agave (CENTURY PLANT)

Agave is a tender perennial or "temperennial" succulent plant that grows best in full sun. Light afternoon shade is recommended in the hottest parts of the country. Plant in well-drained, dry to average soil in containers just slightly wider than the width of the rosette or plant directly in the ground. In summer when the plants are actively growing, they appreciate a bit of supplemental watering and half-strength fertilizer. They should be grown dry in winter. Agave is a slower grower, so it will not quickly overtake the space it is allotted in the landscape.



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Allium (ORNAMENTAL ONION)

Allium is very easy to grow in full sun to part shade. It will tolerate soil of any fertility and will grow in clay soil. This selection has not been known to reseed and is not invasive. It may be propagated in fall by digging it up and dividing the rhizome with the bulblets attached. Allium is typically pest and disease free. Its aromatic foliage also makes it deer and rabbit resistant.



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Baptisia (FALSE INDIGO)

Native to the prairies of North America, baptisia is easy to grow and thrives with little care. It is lovely in meadow plantings, as a backdrop in flower borders, or as a specimen.

Baptisia is a distinctive perennial with showy indigo-blue flowers carried on tapering spikes up to 1ft. long. They are held just above the dense, bushy mounds of soft blue-green foliage. The blooms appear from mid to late spring, followed by 2-3 in. long, black seed pods which remain attractive well into winter. They can be used in dried flower arrangements.



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Buddleia (BUTTERFLY BUSH)

Buddleias should be planted in a full sun location with fertile, moist, well-drained soil. Studies have shown that adding lime to the soil will result in increased growth and better floral quality. They are also quite drought tolerant once established.

Since they frequently die all the way back to the ground in northern winters, it is best to cut back all of the old wood to about 12" in the spring. Doing so will result in more compact plants. They will quickly grow back to their normal height by fall and will flower just as prolifically in late summer since they bloom on new wood. You may notice that the flowers tend to be longer and deeper colored in cooler weather.



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Calamagrostis (FEATHER REED GRASS)

Calamagrostis prefers sunny, dry conditions. It can be grown in nearly any soil, including heavy clay. Be sure to provide plenty of moisture in extremely hot weather. Cut back to 6 in. in spring before new growth begins. Propagate by division in either spring or fall.



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Coreopsis (TICKSEED)

Coreopsis is one of the easiest perennials to maintain and is a good choice for beginners. It compliments nearly every other plant in the garden, and works equally well as an everblooming hedge or as a filler in the middle of the border.



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Dianthus (PINKS)

Dianthus grow best in loose, well-drained, neutral to slightly alkaline soils. Lime can be added to the soil if it is naturally acidic to raise the pH. Dianthus can be grown in full sun or part shade, but the foliage will not be as lush and fewer flowers will be produced if it is grown in hot, dry areas. Regular watering during prolonged dry spells will be necessary. However, they are tolerant of short periods of dryness.



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Echinacea (CONEFLOWER)

Echinacea is native to the eastern US, so it is well-adapted to survive hot, windy conditions. It is quite drought tolerant once established. If properly sited, it forms attractive long-lived colonies.

Coneflowers are a mainstay in today's gardens. Many gardeners choose not to remove the spent blossoms, since the seed heads are a wonderfully nutritious source of food for finches and other birds. The dried seed heads also provide architectural interest in the winter.



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Erianthus (RAVENNA GRASS)

This species is the most cold hardy and toughest of the Erianthus genus. Known for being very adaptable, this plant will grow in nearly any soil as long as it has full sun. It is drought tolerant, but will look better if it is kept watered. Erianthus can be divided in spring or fall and is also easy to grow from seed.



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Euphorbia (CUSHION SPURGE)

In cooler zones, Spurge grows well in full sun. In warmer regions, it is best sited in part shade, avoiding afternoon sun. It prefers average, well-drained soil. 'Ascot Rainbow' typically does not need to be cut back after flowering. At the end of the season, it typically remains standing through the fall into early winter. It is one of the last perennials to go dormant. Cut it back in early spring before new shoots emerge for a better flowering performance.

Use caution and wear gloves when handling this plant; it is **POISONOUS** if eaten and the sap can be a skin and eye irritant.



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Gaillardia (BLANKET FLOWER)

Gaillardia requires full sun and well-drained soil in order to prosper. Given too much shade, the plants tend to flop over. Though they will perform best in moist soils, they are highly drought tolerant. Do not enrich the soil with compost or other rich ingredients when planting this perennial. It does best in poor, loose soils and does not tolerate heavy clay.

Plants may be divided every 2-3 years in either spring or fall and are also easily grown from seed. Deadheading spent blooms will prolong the bloom time.



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Helleborus (LENTEN ROSE)

Hellebores are enjoyable to grow because they are low-maintenance and disease/pest-free. Simply trim back last year's foliage in the spring. They can adapt to almost any growing conditions. Though they prefer rich, moist, organic soil, they will also grow in sandy or clay soil. They can even tolerate short periods of drought.

Hellebores are shade plants that need to be protected from the hot afternoon sun. They will grow in full shade under large deciduous trees as long as they receive full sun from winter to spring before the trees get their leaves.



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Kniphofia (RED HOT POKER)

Kniphofia is a sun lover that likes it hot and dry, though a good supply of water is appreciated when blooming. It can be grown in any well-drained soil.

Kniphofia is evergreen in mild regions and herbaceous in cooler zones. In both areas, it will benefit by having its leaf tips trimmed in the spring to stimulate healthy, new growth. In zones 4-6, the foliage can be tied up over the crown of the plant in the fall to exclude water from settling there and freezing, which would be deadly.



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Lavandula (LAVENDER)

Lavender must be grown in full sun to be able to produce flowers, so do not hesitate to plant them in those hot, dry areas where nothing else seems to grow. They will actually grow better in poor, gravelly soil than in rich humus; don't be tempted to enrich the soil when you plant it. Sharp drainage, especially in winter, is essential for preventing crown rot. Other than that, Lavender is known to have few problems with pests and diseases. Shearing back the evergreen foliage in early spring will rejuvenate plants and stimulate new growth.



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Mangave (PERENNIAL MANGAVE)

Mangave is a tender perennial or "temperennial" succulent plant that grows best in full sun. Plant in well-drained, dry to average soil in containers just slightly wider than the width of the rosette or plant directly in the ground. In summer when the plants are actively growing, they appreciate a bit of supplemental watering and half-strength fertilizer. They should be grown dry in winter. Mangave is a slower grower, so it will not quickly overtake the space it is allotted in the landscape.



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Nepeta (CATMINT)

Nepetas are so satisfying to grow, you've just got to have at least one! With little or no care, you'll be amazed how it starts to bloom in early summer and continues on all the way until fall if deadheaded.

They make great cut flowers too, so they'll keep your vases full all season long. Even when it's not in bloom, nepeta's elegant silvery foliage will accent all the other plants in your garden.



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Oenothera (EVENING PRIMROSE)

Oenothera maintains the best form when planted in poor, well-drained soil and full sun. In more fertile soils, it can be a bit rangy. Use it to cover gravelly banks and other areas where the soil quality is poor. Hot, dry conditions are no problem for this plant.



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Panicum (SWITCH GRASS)

Panicum is native grass that is very easy to grow and is a good grass for beginners. It will grow in any soil, from sand to clay, is drought tolerant once established, and even withstands periodic flooding. Grow this grass in full sun. It will tolerate light shade, but will flop over if the shade is too heavy.

Panicum is wind and salt tolerant, making it a good choice for seaside gardens or along roads that are salted in winter.



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Penstemon (BEARDTONGUE)

Penstemons should be grown in full sun and very well-drained soil to avoid root rot. Soil fertility need only be average, but a light mulch in winter is recommended. Use Penstemons in the border, for naturalizing, and for cut flowers.



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Perovskia (RUSSIAN SAGE)

No sunny perennial garden would be complete without Russian Sage. This is an essential perennial for the middle or back of the border, as it provides the ideal backdrop for all other flowering plants before it. It is extremely long-blooming, from summer into fall, and makes an excellent cut flower. When not in bloom, the finely textured, silvery foliage lends a light, airy look to the garden.



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Schizachyrium (LITTLE BLUESTEM)

This grass is terrific in a border or meadow setting. It needs full sun and is tolerant of heat and humidity. Schizachyrium can grow in either acidic or alkaline soils, and can tolerate a range of moisture conditions including average to extremely dry. It does not need to be fertilized. It's a good idea to cut this grass back to ground level in late fall in order to have a sturdier plant the coming year.



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Sedum (AUTUMN STONECROP)

Sedum is one of the most popular perennials in America because it is very easy to grow and hardy in most areas of the country. Its thick, succulent leaves store water, making it drought tolerant, and pests and diseases rarely present a problem. The seed heads of the taller varieties provide excellent winter interest and food for birds.



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Sempervivum (HEN & CHICKS)

Sempervivum is the perfect plant for hot, dry, sunny locations with very well-drained soil. Though they can adapt to a variety of soil types, they perform best in gritty soil. If a groundcover effect is desired, space plants close together because they grow slowly.



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Yucca (ADAM'S NEEDLE)

Yuccas thrive in any type of well-drained soil including those that are very dry. Though they will grow in partial shade, they reach their full potential only if they receive sun all day long. Many yuccas do not bloom until they are mature. Once they start, though, you will see that they were worth the wait. The flower stalks retain some ornamental value after the blooms have faded. Mature plants sometimes develop plantlets near their base. These can be dug and transplanted elsewhere if desired.



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