

YARD AND GARDEN

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Favorite Herbaceous Perennials

Tradition is important to many people, and flower gardeners are no exception. Many feel the time-honored traditional flower varieties that have inhabited home landscape flowerbeds for decades are still the best.

Old-timers like iris and daylily, both herbaceous perennials, still are capable of supplying lively landscape color.

Fortunately, these old-timers are still available to today's gardeners. Five old-time herbaceous perennial favorites on many a flower gardener's list are purple flowered bearded iris, the common orange Daylily (*Hermerocallis fulva*), the tall blue-spiked Lupine, the bushy herbaceous Peony with its luscious blooms and the Columbine with its foliage and nectar carrying flowers.

Of course it's always interesting to mix the old with the new. Colorful perennial flower varieties that have been introduced more recently include Hosta, Kniphofia, Phlox, Rockcress (*Arabis*) and Campanula, just to name a few.

Hosta, (also called Plantain Lily) is a plant that can add something of a deep jungle atmosphere to your own backyard. The wide range of varieties with large, soft textured leaves allow you to create almost any kind of landscape picture. The leaves die down in the winter and return the following spring. And then there are the flowers, and additional dividend with Hosta.

Kniphofia, also known as Red Hot Poker or Torch Lily, is a good accent perennial. Plant it in a spot in the yard that receives full sunlight, and where you want a bright, showy display of flowers in mid-summer.

The name Red Hot Poker comes from the plant's clusters of flowers that arise from the stem and bloom in succession from the base of a two or three foot stalk. An additional value of the plant is that hummingbirds are attracted to the flowers.

Phlox comes in annual and perennial types. One of the best is the perennial Phlox *divaricata* (Sweet William Phlox) that blooms profusely in early spring. A bed of this Phlox will remain vigorous and blooming for years with a minimum of care. Plant in full sun and in well drained soil.

Arabis, or Rockcress, is one of those perennials that you never notice until it blooms and then you try to find someone who knows what it's name is. This is a good perennial for the rock garden or for edging along pathways. Arabis is a spring bloomer and a small, low growing plant that prefers open sunlight and reasonably good soil.

Campanula or Bellflower, is another type with a wealth of varieties that give a wide array of sizes, shapes and colors. Of the campanulas, some are biennial (they take two years to flower), some are annuals that last only a single year, but most of them are perennials.

Make sure when you buy Campanula that you know what sort you are getting. The flowers are generally bell shaped, usually blue, lavender, violet, purple or white. They bloom from spring to fall if planted in good soil and kept watered through summer.



OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

MISSION
The Oregon State University Extension Service educates Oregonians by delivering research-based, objective information to help them solve problems, develop leadership, and manage resources wisely.

ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES
The *credibility of information* from OSU Extension Service is critical. It should be objective, responsive, and based on university research and experience.
Program development should be focused on priorities established with clientele.
Excellence in educational delivery is Extension's business. The effective transfer of knowledge and delivery of educational programs is essential for the improvement of individuals and communities as well as for continued public support.
Effective utilization of resources is critical. Appropriate integration of disciplines, development of volunteers, and communication with other agencies will significantly increase our accomplishments.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES
Economic Development: Help the State and its communities, businesses, families, and individuals develop and expand economic opportunities.
Human Development: Develop skills and values that will lead to improved social and physical well being of families and individuals of all ages.
Natural Resource Conservation and Management: Enhance the ability of individuals and groups in making decisions for the use of natural resources, considering societal concerns and competing demands and values.
Leadership Development: Help citizens develop leadership skills and facilitate their meaningful participation in their communities and in improving personal productivity.

Soil Testing Pinpoints Nutrition Problems

Nutrition deficiency in garden soil means garden plants grown in that soil will suffer.

When key nutrients are in short supply in the soil supporting garden vegetable plants, they will show hunger symptoms. The result is weak plants that yield poorly. However, nutrient deficiency in garden soil can be discovered early through soil testing.

The most accurate way to test your soil is to send a representative sample to a laboratory for analysis. Several private soil testing labs offer their services to gardeners as well as farmers. Oregon State University also provides soil testing service.

Check with the local county Extension office for information on available testing services in your area.

The results you obtain from a laboratory will only be as good as the sample you submit. Take samples from the top 6-8 inches of garden soil where most of the plant roots are located.

Collect a number of subsamples that are representative of the overall garden. Avoid taking samples from areas where water stands for long periods if that condition occurs in only a small part of the garden. Also, avoid sampling in places where larger-than-usual amounts of lime, fertilizer, or organic materials have built up in the soil over time.

When testing soil around trees or other deep-rooted plants, make sure the sample includes soil from a foot or more depth.

Mix the subsamples you collect together to represent a single soil type or condition. After the soil subsamples have been thoroughly mixed, package a small portion for delivery to a soil testing laboratory.

Use clean sampling tools and avoid contaminating the sample during mixing and packaging.

Soil testing can be very helpful when starting a garden in a new area. Testing can also pinpoint problems that you suspect may be present due to poor plant performance. However, if there are no special problems, most gardens need not be soil tested any more than every four to five years.

Thatch Removal Helps Choking Lawns

Spring lawns with that choked, gasping look may well be afflicted with a thick, strangling layer of lawn thatch, a build-up of old leaves, stems and grass clippings at the base of the grass plant. The solution to this problem is thatch removal. Thatch can cause many lawn problems. It forms a layer that soaks up water and nutrients, preventing them from reaching the roots of the grass. It harbors weeds and diseases and, because it raises the cutting level of the lawnmower, the lawn can't be cut to the correct height.

Bentgrasses, bluegrasses and fescues all develop a thatch of dead plant material on the soil surface. Dwarf ryegrasses, on the other hand are slow to develop thatch.

Bentgrasses are the worst offenders. They can benefit from a yearly thatch removal, while bluegrass-fescue lawns need it less frequently.

The tools needed to remove thatch depend on the size of the lawn. A hand rake should handle areas smaller than a thousand square feet. For larger lawns, rent a dethatcher at a garden store to make the job easier and faster.

When removing thatch, mow the lawn as low as possible and remove all clippings. Set the dethatcher to slice into the thatch near the soil surface and go over the lawn at that setting.

Remove the debris by raking or sweeping, then use the dethatcher again in a crosswise direction to the first cutting. Remove the clippings.

The lawn may look pretty bad by this time, but it will recover.

Help For Home Gardeners

The Oregon State University Extension Service has available several publications intended to provide helpful information to Oregon homeowners who grow their own fruits and vegetables.

These publications are available at county offices of the OSU Extension Service, or by writing to the Bulletins Mailing Office, Industrial Building, OSU, Corvallis, Or. 97331. Include 25 cents for postage and handling.

For orchardist: *Selecting Peach Varieties for the Willamette Valley*, EC 1181, \$.50; *Sweet Cherry Varieties and Pollinizer for Oregon*, FS 57, no charge; *When to Pick Apples and Pears*, FS 147, no charge.

How to Find Help Identifying Fruit Trees, FS 238, no charge; *Grafting Fruit Trees*, PNW 62, \$.50; *Training and Pruning Apple and Pear Trees*, PNW 156, \$.50; *Highbush Blueberry Production*, PNW 215, \$1.00; *Growing Red Raspberries in Oregon*, EC 764, \$.25.

For gardeners: *Soil and Water Management for Home Gardeners*, EC 824, \$.25; *Growing Potatoes in the Home Garden*, EC 1004, \$.25; *Tomatoes in the Garden*, FS 53, no charge; *Collecting and Storing Seeds from your Garden*, FS 220, no charge; *Producing Transplants at home*, FS 225, no charge.

Discourage Plant Diseases in Your Home Garden, FS 242, no charge; *Constructing Coldframes and Hotbeds*, FS 246, no charge; *Raised Bed Gardening*, FS 270, no charge; *Building Hobby Greenhouses*, PNW 171, \$.25.