



PERENNIALS

Janet Taylor

*"We come from the earth, we return to the earth
and in-between we garden."*



What is a perennial?

- The word “perennial” is from Latin and means:

Enduring or Perpetual

They are plants that survive more than 2 growing seasons.

Humorous definition

- *“A perennial is a plant that would have lived several years if it had not died.”*

Two groups of perennials

- Woody – including trees and shrubs, some vines and other plants that have bark covered stems that do not die back to the ground at the end of the growing season.



- **Herbaceous** – plants that usually have green supple stems without woody tissue. These plants die back at some point during the year to ground level but their roots remain alive and “reawaken” when conditions are right for their growth.

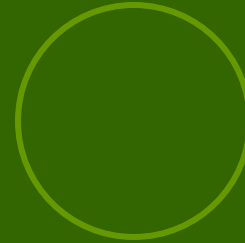


Perennial vs. Annual

- The fact that perennials survive more than 2 full growing seasons distinguishes them from:
 - **Annuals** – which die after 1 growing season
 - **Biennials** - which die after 2 growing seasons

Length of Life of Perennials

- *"They are perennials,
not immortal."*



- Some perennials survive and bloom reliably for decades while others die out after a few seasons. The length of life of a perennial depends on:
 - Its genetic makeup
 - Whether its personal growing requirements are met including:
 - Site
 - Care
 - Culture

Genetic Makeup

- Aquilegia (Columbine) has a short life (3 years) but reseeds well for survival.
- Hosta has a genetic makeup that produces slow growth but long life.





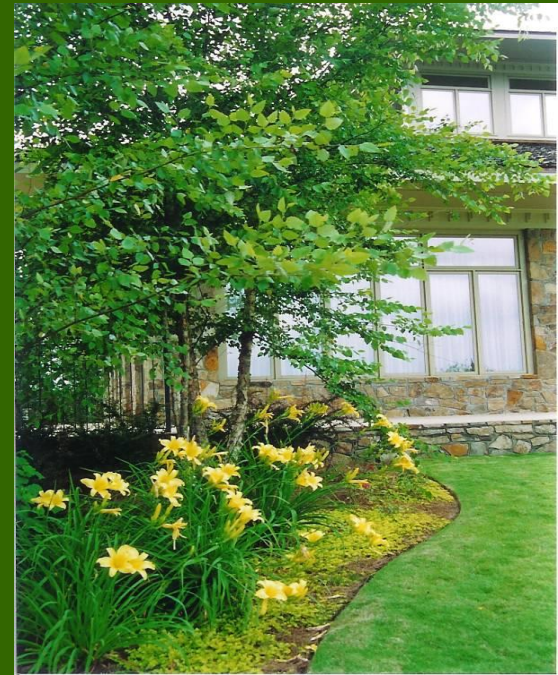
Growing requirements Site, Care and Culture

- Site

- It is important to place a perennial in a site to which it is accustomed to prolong its life. Plants that have adapted to harsh environmental conditions will do poorly if planted in another climate.



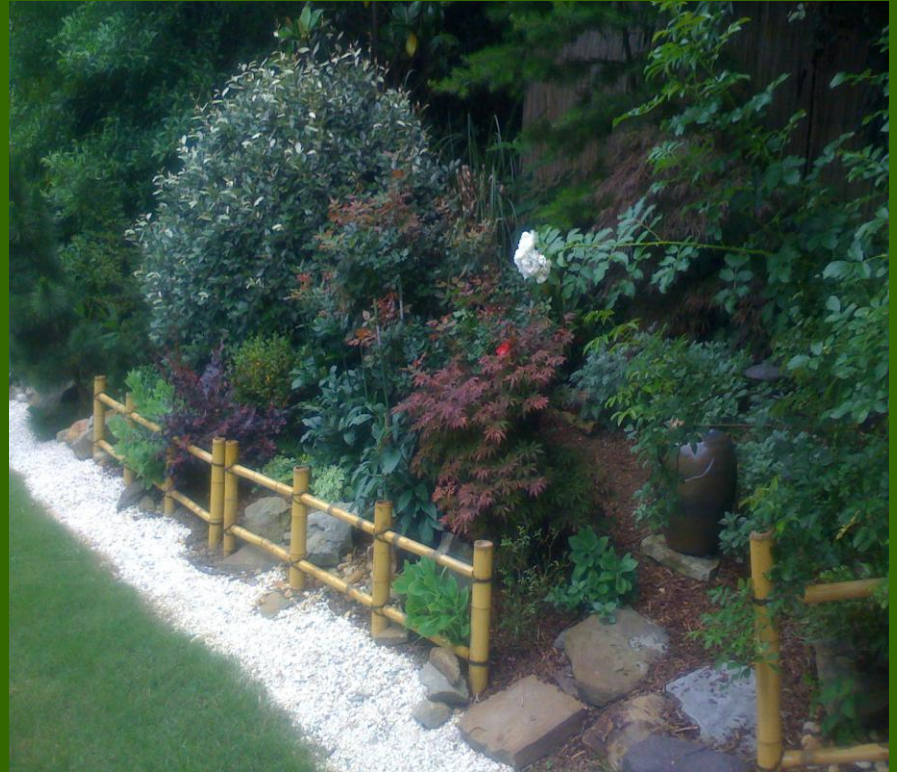
Gaura, a perennial that likes it hot and dry will have a shortened life if planted in cold climates just as cool loving delphiniums will be short lived in hot southern climates.

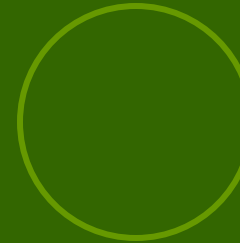
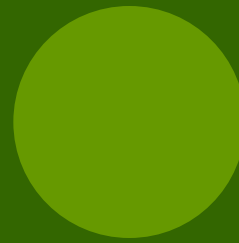


Sun lovers like daylilies planted in the shade may bloom less if at all, but place shade loving hostas in the sun and their leaves will burn.

- Care

- The care provided to perennials affect the length of their life. Too little water when becoming established will shorten a plant's life as will the wrong soil type or lack of division when needed. Confining a spreading perennial to an area will shorten its life as will stress from wildlife or insects.





Astibe likes moisture



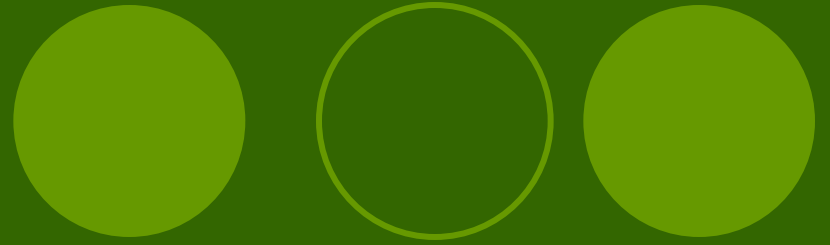
Hyssop likes well drained soil



Monarda needs to spread



Animals and insects cause stress



- Culture – the general cultural requirements of perennials include:

- Soil

- Sun

- Water

- Hardiness



Soil

● *“Don't plant a \$5
plant in a 50 cent hole”*

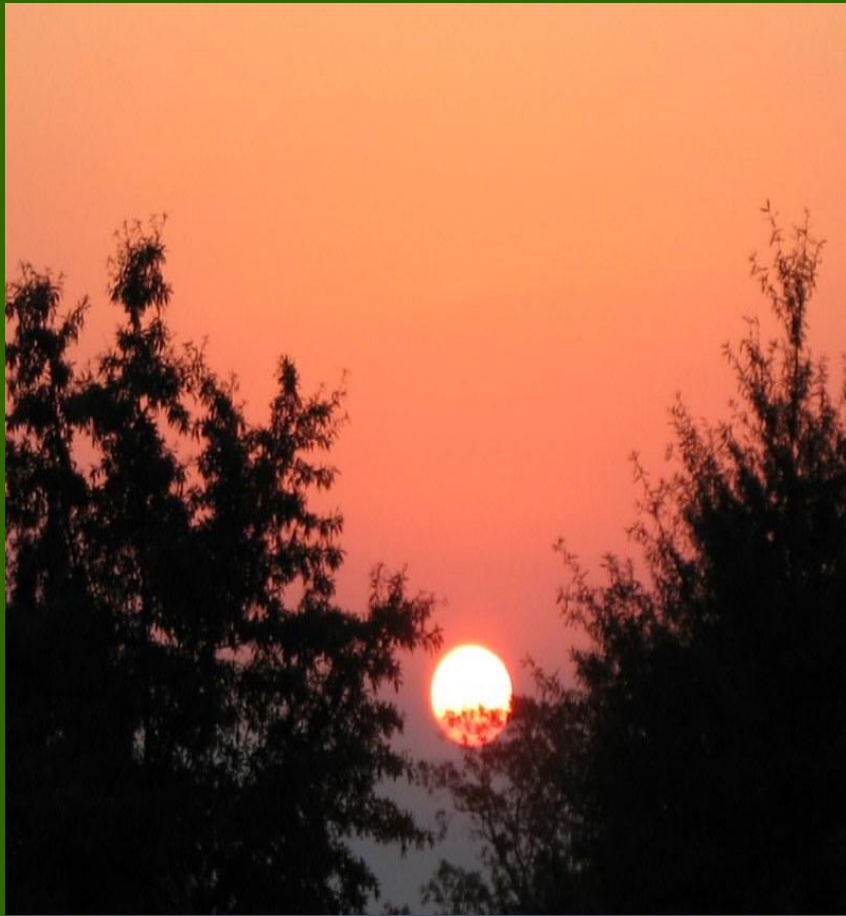
Soil

- The better the structure of the soil at planting time, the greater the success. Poor soil should be amended by adding organic matter. Most perennials grow best in well drained, not overly dry or wet soil. The pH of the soil is important. Most perennials are at their best in soil with a pH between 6 and 7.
- 0 - 6.9 = Acid
- 7.1 – 14 = Alkaline



Sun

Oh Mister Sun, Sun, Mr. Golden Sun won't you please shine down on Me.



- The amount of sun or shade a plant requires and receives is of great importance. Light preferences given by books and catalogues are only a guide because the intensity of the sun and shade in any given location is a factor that varies across the country and even across the yard.



Water

- *“Gardening requires a lot of water, mostly in the form of perspiration”*



Water

- The amount of water any given plant requires is an important part of its culture. Generally, newly planted perennials need more water and more supervision of their water requirements than established plants. The amount of water required is also tied to the soil and its moisture content. Generally, perennials perform better if watered at their roots rather than by overhead watering. Early morning watering is favored over mid day or evening watering.

Hardiness (Zones)

- “If you are not killing plants you are not really stretching yourself as a gardener”

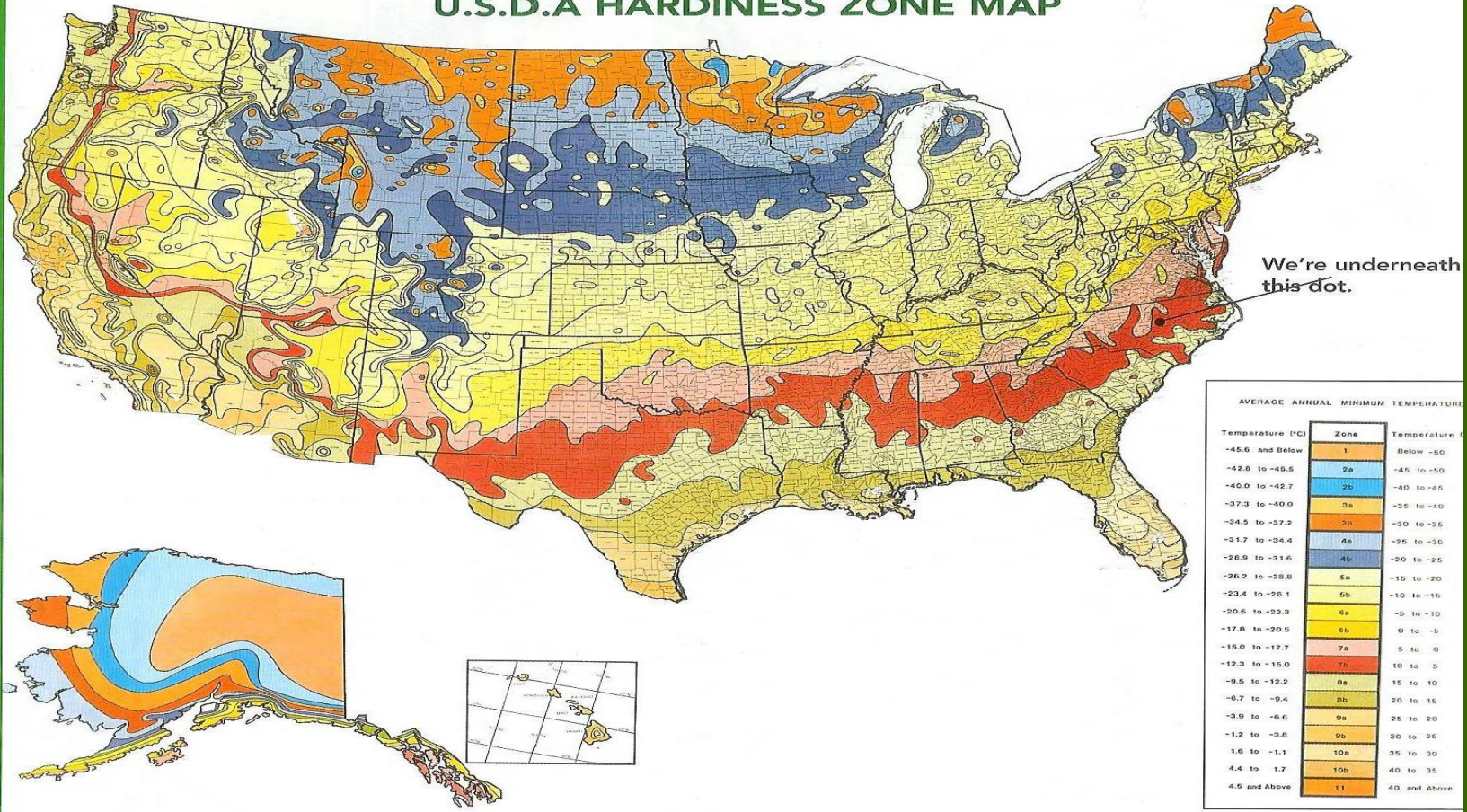
● J. C. Raulston



Hardiness (Zones)

- Ranges have been established for all plants – but they are only guides. Many plants are tolerant of a wider range than labeled. The USDA lists 10 zones, but these have been further divided to include an “a” and “b” in each zone. Birmingham is located in Zone 7b (the same zone as Plants Delight Nursery). The map is based on average winter low temperatures and does not take into account rare extremes.

U.S.D.A HARDINESS ZONE MAP



E-mail: office@plantsdelight.com Online: www.plantsdelight.com

Courtesy of Plants Delight Nursery www.plantsdelight.com

Care and Maintenance of Perennials

- Planting
- Fertilizing
- Deadheading
- Dividing
- Pruning





Planting

- *“The first year it sleeps,*
- *the second year it creeps,*
- *the third year it leaps”*

Planting

- Fall is the best time for planting spring and summer blooming perennials – early spring is the best time for planting late summer and fall blooming perennials
- Water plants well before planting
- Add composted manure and/or leaf compost to improve the texture of your soil. Conduct a soil test and alter your pH as necessary
- Plant in groups of 3 or 5 for visual impact. Remember to check plant heights in order to plant tall plants in the back and low plants in front.





Fertilizer

- *The best fertilizer is the gardener's shadow"*



Fertilizing

- A well fed plant is hardier and less subject to insects and diseases. A time release fertilizer can be used in the early spring with an application later in the summer. Leaf mold is a good fertilizer to use around the base of plants in the early spring.



Pruning

- The objectives of pruning are to:
 - Extend the bloom time or to promote repeat blooms
 - Increase the flower size or number
 - To stagger plant heights or bloom times
 - To reduce the plant height
 - To keep plants in their space
 - To encourage new growth and enhance the overall appearance
 - To regenerate or extend the life of the plant
 - To prevent or control pests and disease



Deadheading

- Deadheading is the term used for removing spent flowers
- Flowers that repeat bloom will often do so only if the old flowers are removed
- Plants that go to seed, stop producing flowers
- Sometimes it is best to remove the flower bud, but when each flower is on its own stem, it is better to deadhead the entire flowering stem
- Deadheading should be done throughout the flowering season



Dividing

- The three main reasons for dividing is to control the size of the plants, to help rejuvenate them, and to increase their number
- Signs that perennials need dividing
 - When the plant runs out of growing room
 - The center has smaller leaves, fewer flowers, weaker stalks
- It is best to divide spring and summer blooming perennials in the fall (October) and fall bloomers in the spring (as soon as the growing tips have emerged)
- Divide when plants look good
- Divide on cooler, cloudy days, with rain in the forecast

Dividing, cont'd

- Water plants thoroughly, a day or two ahead
- Prepare the area where you intend to plant the new divisions (if not ready keep plants cool and damp – cover with newspaper)
- Prune the stems and foliage to 6” to ease division (fall) or tie the stems together (summer)
- Use a sharp shovel or spading fork to dig down deep on all 4 sides of the plant, at the drip line –
- Dig a trench around the clump and angle down until you can pry underneath and lift the entire clump to be divided

Dividing, cont'd

- Replenish soil with organic matter (compost)
- There are 5 basic root types – division depends on the type (Offsets, surface roots, taproots, underground running roots, woody roots)
- Keep only the healthiest pieces; sometimes you may have to cut through the crown with a sharp knife, keeping at least one developing eye or bud with each division – replant no more than 20-25% of the original clump
- Spread out your divisions – plant into holes that are at least twice as wide as its roots when spread out.
- Water well!!

Nomenclature

- Botanists and horticulturalists use a two-name system to label over 250,000 species of plants. These names are in Latin form. The scientific name is made up of the genus and the species. Genus is always first and capitalized. Species follows and is not capitalized. If another Latin name follows it denotes a subspecies. Cultivated plants chosen for a particular attribute are often “selected” and given a name that follows the species name and is capitalized and placed in single quotations.



Achillea millefolium 'Paprika'

| | | |
|-------|---------|---------|
| Genus | species | variety |
|-------|---------|---------|

Design

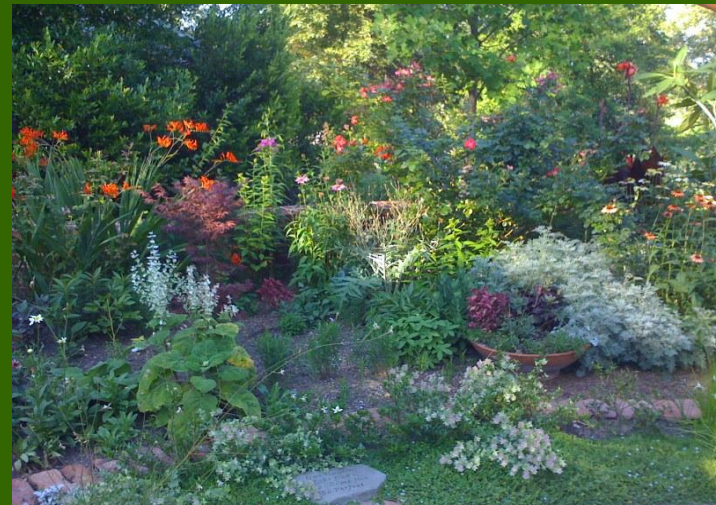
"In his garden every man may be his own artist, without apology or explanation"

Louise Beebe Wilder



Using Perennials in Designing Gardens

- Rules about design are often “fashion” – don’t let them keep you from designing the garden you like. Experimentation can be fun and rewarding.
- Design types include:
 - Flowerbeds and borders
 - Butterfly and Hummingbird gardens
 - Woodland gardens
 - Native Plant gardens
 - Cut Flower garden
 - Perennials in containers





Borders

- Plantings of perennials are often called “borders”. They are often planted in front of a hedge, fence or wall that serves as a background or canvas against which you paint with perennials.
- Plantings that include shrubs or annuals are often called “mixed borders”. Shrubs can provide the structure or “bones” through the winter months when the perennials are dormant. Annuals can help fill in the gaps between blooming periods of perennials.
- Tall plants are usually at the back of the border, but not always – especially if they are fragrant or have details that are best appreciated up close. Don’t be afraid of tall plants, even in a small garden – strong vertical elements will make your garden appear larger and more exciting.

Mixed border from start to finish



















Containers

- Perennials can be grown in containers. Choose the largest containers possible. These can be filled with flowers or used as a focal point. Plants in a pot can be elevated so they can be seen and not overlooked in a mixed border.





Perennial Plant Association Plant of the Year

- For over 15 years the Perennial Plant Association has named a Plant of the Year. Each of these plants are low maintenance, thrive in a wide range of climates, are easily propagated and exhibit multiple season interest. These plants are well worth knowing and growing.

PPA Plants of the Year 1991-2006

- 2010 *Amsonia hubrichtii*
- 2009 *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola'
- 2008 *Geranium* 'Rozanne'
- 2007 *Nepeta* 'Walkers Low'
- 2006 *Dianthus gratianopolitanus* 'Feuerhexe'
- 2005 *Helleborus xhybridus*
- 2004 *Athyrium niponicum* 'Pictum'
- 2003 *Leucanthemum* 'Becky'
- 2002 *Phlox* 'David'
- 2001 *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'
- 2000 *Scabiosa columbaria* 'Butterfly Blue'
- 1999 *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'
- 1998 *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus'
- 1997 *Salvia* 'Mainacht' (May Night)
- 1996 *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red'
- 1995 *Perovskia atriplicifolia*
- 1994 *Astilbe* 'Sprite'
- 1993 *Veronica* 'Sunny Border Blue'
- 1992 *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'
- 1991 *Heuchera micrantha* 'Palace Purple'

Amsonia hubrichtii

2010



Phlox paniculata 'David'

2002



Leucanthemum "Becky"

2003



Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum'
Japanese Painted Fern - 2004



Helleborus x hybridus
Lenten Rose - 2005



Dianthus gratianopolitanus 'Feuerhexe'
(*'Firewitch'*) - 2006



Geranium 'Rozanne'

2008



“Pass-along Plants to know and love”



Daylilies



Hosta



Lenten Rose



Hardy Begonia



Ginger Lily



Swamp Sunflower

Perennials for Shade

B
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p



Dicentra spectabilis

Light shade, spring, 2', summer dormant



Polygonatum multiflorum 'Variegatum'

shade, spring, 2'



Astilbe c. 'Ostrich Plume'

shade, spring, 24"



Tiareella cordifolia “Skeleton Key”

part shade, spring, 6 – 12



Lamium maculatum 'Pink Pewter'

shade, mid spring to summer, 6"



Perennials for Sun



Centranthus ruber

sun, summer, 3'



Geranium sanguineum 'Album'

sun to part shade, spring to early summer, 12 – 15" mound



Coreopsis 'Crème Brulee'

sun, summer, 10"



Dicliptera



Sedum alboroseum 'Autumn Joy'

Sun, early fall to frost, 15"



Muhlenbergia capillaris

Sun, fall, 3'



Rubeckia 'Herbstsonne'

Full sun, Aug.-Oct. 5'



Lychnis coronaria 'Cerise'

Full sun, biennial but reseeds, late spring, 30"



Rudbeckia 'Henry Eilers'



Phlox p. 'Dr. Givihan'

Full sun to light shade, summer, 40"



Verbena c. 'Miss Anne'

sun, all summer, 10" x 12"



Echinacea 'Sundown'

Sun, summer, 36"



Echinacea p. 'After Midnight'



Stachys byzantina "Helene von Stein"

sun, few blooms, 8" x 3'



Gaillardia aristata

sun, summer, 3" flowers, 8" x 10" spread



'Arizona Sun'



'Burgundy'

Rumex



White Star Grass



Books



- The Well-Designed Mixed Garden, by Tracy DiSabato-Aust
- The Well-Tended Perennial Garden, by Tracy DiSabato-Aust
- Passalong Plants, by Steve Bender and Felder Rushing
- Armitage's Garden Perennials, by Allan Armitage
- Herbaceous Perennial Plants, by Allan Armitage
- The Southern Gardeners' Book of Lists, by Lois Trigg Chaplain
- Gardening With Perennials, Month by Month, by Joseph Hudak

Websites



- www.bluestoneperennials.com
- www.plantsdelight.com
- www.bluebirdnursery.com
- www.perennialplant.org
- www.waltersgardens.com

CATALOG PRIMER—WHAT “KEY” WORDS REALLY MEAN

- “may bloom the first year” = it won’t bloom the first year
- “vigorous grower” = think kudzu—this term should set off flashing red lights in your head. These plants will devour your house and yard in weeks.
- “provides winter interest” = means really, really boring in all the other seasons
- “limited supply” = sold out the day BEFORE the catalog was mailed; or they’re hoarding the handful they do have for close friends, relatives or LARGE donors

Remember the Spring Plant Sale

April 15-18, 2010

