

c.2

service in ACTION

RECEIVED

APR 12 1990

 COLORADO STATE LIBRARY
 State Publications Library

**Colorado
State**
 University
 Cooperative
 Extension

no. 7.231

Xeriscaping: garden flowers for low-water landscapes

James R. Feucht¹
 COLORADO STATE PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY
 UCSU20/6.22/7.231 c.2 local
 Feucht, James R./Xeriscaping : garden fl


3 1799 00013 9337

Quick Facts

Garden flowers provide a means for a showy, colorful display in a xeriscape. Soils should be improved before planting most flowers.

Soil improvement is easier if only annual flowers are used for the first year or two.

Perennial garden flowers should not be planted until soils are improved.

Plant flowers according to the exposure of the site.

Spring-flowering bulbs are drought-evaders and thus make good flowers for a xeriscape.



Figure 1: Black-eyed-susan provides late summer color.

Garden flowers provide a means for showy, colorful displays to complement trees and shrubs in a xeriscape (pronounced zer-i-skāp), a water-conserving landscape. Once an overall plan for your yard is made as suggested in Service in Action sheet 7.228 and the trees and shrubs are selected and planted as described in sheet 7.229, you can add color with garden perennials and annuals. Such plans can be integrated with shrub borders and groupings of trees or they may be put in their own beds along fences, walls, walks and patios.

Soil Conditions

Before selecting garden flowers, check the condition of the soil. If it is a heavy clay, most

flowers will do poorly due to lack of oxygen to their roots. Soils that are very sandy may have poor water-holding capacity and be low in available mineral elements. If either extreme is true, *do not plant perennial flowers* the first year or two. Improve the soil with sphagnum peat, available in bales or bags at garden centers. Incorporate a

¹James R. Feucht, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension specialist, landscape plants; prepared in cooperation with the Technical Advisory Committee for Xeriscape Front Range, an affiliate of the National Xeriscape Council, Inc. (revised 6/88)

cubic foot of sphagnum per 8' x 10' area to a depth of 9 inches. Plant only annuals so it will be easier to cultivate and incorporate organic matter when the plants are killed by frost. Repeat additions of sphagnum until the soil is easily worked and does not compact. Perennial garden flowers may then be planted.

Pay Attention to Garden Exposure

Select plants that are compatible with the exposure. If planting on north sides of structures or in with shrubs that might shade them, pick plants that will tolerate less sun than those thriving best in full sun. For example, garden perennials to be put in a shaded spot might include canterbury bells (*Campanula*), primrose (*Primula*) and violets (*Viola*). Such plants usually need cool, more consistently moist soils than the vast majority of garden flowers. They can, nevertheless, be useful in the shaded parts of a xeriscape,

especially if organic mulches such as wood chips are added to reduce watering frequency.

Rock Gardens

Rock gardens can be an attractive addition to a xeriscape garden. They should be installed in logical areas such as steep sunny slopes rather than mounds in the middle of a yard. Use care in installing the rock to achieve a natural look. Avoid the "rock pile look" or "garden of rock." For more information on rock gardens and the plants to use, refer to Service in Action sheet 7.401, *Rock gardens*.

A Selection of Garden Flowers

Following is a selection of garden flowers, including some bulbs, that can be successfully integrated in a xeriscape planting. They are listed by exposure to sun.

Perennial Plants for Shady Spots

Plant name	Flower color	Flowering time	Height (feet)	Remarks
<i>Anchusa</i> (Italian Bugloss)	Deep blue	June-July	3-5	Tall accent.
<i>Anchusa azurea</i>				
Bleeding heart	Deep pink	April-June	1½	Use with shrubs, north sides.
<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i>				
Candytuft	White	April-June	1	Foliage evergreen.
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>				
Canterbury bells	Pink, purple, white	June-July	3	Tall accent.
<i>Campanula medium</i>				
Cardinal flower	Bright red	July-Sept.	2	Use in dense shade.
<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>				
Columbine	White, blue, pink, yellow	May-June	1-2	Use with shrubs.
<i>Aquilegia</i> spp.				
Dragon head (false)	Lavender, white	Aug.-Sept.	3-3½	Aggressive creeper.
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i>				
Gas plant	White, pink	June-July	2-3	Use with shrubs.
<i>Dictamnus</i> spp.				
Golden banner	Yellow	May	1-2	Aggressive creeper.
<i>Thermopsis divaricata</i>				
Harebell	Blue, white	June-Oct.	1	Useful edging.
<i>Campanula</i> spp.				
Monkshood	Purple	June-Sept.	3-4	Use in dense shade.
<i>Aconitum napellus</i>				
Pansy (tufted)	Various	May-Sept.	½	Shade or sun.
<i>Viola vornuta</i>				
Primrose	Yellow, red, blue	April-May	½	Showy spring flowers.
<i>Primula</i> spp.				
Violet	White, purple	April-May	½	Aggressive creeper.
<i>Viola odorata</i>				

Perennials for Sunny Spots *denotes most drought-enduring

<i>Alyssum</i> (golden)	Yellow	April	1	Reseed readily.
<i>Alyssum saxatile</i>				
Aster (New England)	Purple, white	Sept.	3-5	Showy for fall.
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>				
Baby's breath	White	July-Sept.	2½	Lacy, bush-like.
<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>				
Beebalm	Crimson	June-July	2-3	Best in mass plantings.
<i>Monarda didyma</i>				
*Black-eyed susan	Yellow	July	2-3	Needs space.
<i>Rudbeckia hirta pulcherrima</i>				
*Blanket flower	Red-orange	June-Sept.	2	One of the best for xeriscapes.
<i>Gaillardia aristata</i>				

Plant name	Flower color	Flowering time	Height (feet)	Remarks
*Butterfly weed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Orange	July-Aug.	1-1½	Grows in poor soils; very deep-rooted.
*Butter & eggs <i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	Yellow	June-Aug.	1-1½	Grows in poor soils.
*Cactus (various plant groups)	Various	May-Aug.	Various	Use in sandy soils.
*Coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Yellow, purple	Aug.-Sept.	4-6	For tall background.
*Coreopsis <i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	Yellow	June-Aug.	3	Easy to grow in most soils.
*Cornflower <i>Centaurea Cyanus</i>	Blue, white	May-Sept.	2	Border plant, cut flower
Daisy (painted) <i>Chrysanthemum coccineum</i>	White, pink	May-July	2-3	Showy, cut flower.
Daisy (shasta) <i>Chrysanthemum maximum</i>	White	July-Aug.	2-2½	Useful with shrubs.
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.	Yellow, red, orange	June-July	2-2½	Spreads to large clumps.
Delphinium <i>Delphinium elatum</i>	White, purple, blue	June-July	4-6	Tall accent; may need staking.
*Flax <i>Linum perenne</i>	Blue	May-Sept.	1½	Almost shrub-like.
*Gayfeather <i>Liatris scariosa</i>	Lavender	July-Sept.	1-2	Showy in late summer.
*Golden glow <i>Rudbeckia laciniata hortensiana</i>	Yellow	July-Sept.	5-6	Tall, late summer flower.
*Hollyhock <i>Alcea rosea</i>	Various	June-Sept.	4-8	Tall accent; grows almost anywhere.
*Iris (bearded) <i>Iris germanica</i>	Various	May-June	½-3	Of easy culture.
*Lavender <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>	Lavender	July-Aug.	1	Fragrant; shrub-like.
Lupine <i>Lupinus polyphyllus</i>	Various	June-Aug.	2½-3	Good accent with shrubs.
Pansy (tufted) <i>Viola cornuta</i>	Various	May-Sept.	½	Shade or sun.
*Paperflower <i>Zinnia grandiflora</i>	Yellow	June-Sept.	½	Long-lasting bloom.
*Penstemon <i>Penstemon</i> spp.	Red, white, blue	June-July	2-3	Many varieties.
Peony <i>Paeonia officinalis</i>	White, pink, red	May-June	2-2½	Tolerates some shade.
Phlox <i>Phlox paniculata</i>	White, lavender	May-July	1-1½	Easy to grow.
*Poppy (iceland) <i>Papaver nudicaule</i>	Orange hues	April-June	1	Good edging plant.
*Poppy (oriental) <i>P. orientalis</i>	Orange, salmon, red	May-June	1½-2	Aggressive creeper.
*Scabiosa <i>Scabiosa caucasica</i>	Lavender	May-Aug.	1-1½	Fern-like foliage.
*Sedum (stonecrop) <i>Sedum</i> spp.	Various	May-Sept.	½-1	Many varieties; succulent foliage.
**Spurge (euphorbia) <i>Euphorbia</i> spp.	Yellow	April-May	1-2	Grows in poor soils.
*Sulphur flower <i>Eriogonum umbellatum</i>	Yellow	May-June	½	Grows in poor soils.
Sweet william <i>Dianthus barbatus</i>	White, pink, red	May	2	Aggressive biennial.
*Thrift <i>Armeria maritima</i>	Pink	May-Aug.	1	Grass-like foliage.
Veronica <i>Veronica spicata</i>	Purple	May-June	2-4	Aggressive creeper.
*Yarrow <i>Achillea</i> spp.	Yellow, white, pink	July-Sept.	1-3	Adapts to very poor soils; fern-like, aromatic foliage.

**Caution. Avoid use of cypress spurge, *Euphorbia cyparissias* because of its tendency to escape into rangeland and hybridize with leafy spurge, a noxious weed.

Annuals

With some soil preparation and no more than one hand-watering a week, almost all annuals commonly sold will do well in xeriscape gardens. For the hot, dry exposures, the most reliable include: marigolds, zinnias, cockscomb, sweet alyssum and bachelor's button. Where soils are shaded and cooler, use annuals such as lobelia, pansy and forget-me-not.

Bulbs

Most bulbs do best in full sun, but they must

have well-drained soils. Spring-flowering bulbs are well-suited for xeriscape plantings because they are drought-evaders; that is, they grow in the cooler, more moist periods of spring and fall and lie dormant underground during the hot summer months. Use tulips, grape hyacinths, hyacinths, daffodils and crocus for naturalizing a xeriscape. In fall, scatter bulbs in the areas you want them and plant where they land. For more information on bulbs, refer to Service in Action sheets 7.410 and *Flowers from fall-planted bulbs and corms*, and 7.411, *Flowers from spring-planted bulbs, corms and roots*.