

There are so many praiseworthy perennials for sunny gardens available at local garden centers, how can gardeners choose when planting a small space? If forced to choose just ten perennials to design a sunny border, I would select these tried and true performers.

Planted at the front of the border, *Phlox subulata* wakes up the garden in spring with a burst of color. Awaken to pink, lavender or white depending on the cultivar chosen. They grow 6 inches tall and up to 2 feet wide.

*Euphorbia epithymoides* 'Bonfire' is another front-of-the-border beauty. Growing 12 to 18 inches tall and slightly wider, its chartreuse flowers (botanically bracts) are prominently displayed against dark burgundy leaves in late spring.

*Nepeta faassenii* 'Purssian Blue' takes over front row duty for the summer. It boasts sweet sky blue flowers on compact plants similar in size to *Euphorbia* 'Bonfire'. Cut it back after its first round of flowers for a second go around.

Fill the middle of the border with plants that are not only beautiful in bloom but also offer textural interest. I would never have a sunny perennial garden without *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Zagreb'. Small, bright yellow, daisy-like flowers bloom over fine foliage all summer long.

Partner the soft, fine foliage of *Coreopsis* 'Zagreb' with the bold, purplish-green leaves of *Sedum* 'Matrona'. The sedum will begin showing off its rosy flower clusters on sturdy, red, 30-inch stems when *Coreopsis* 'Zagreb' is winding down.

*Geranium* 'Rozanne' is a blooming machine, displaying periwinkle flowers non-stop from late spring to early fall. She grows up to 20 inches tall and spreads at least 2 feet wide, mingling amiably with other perennials.

Beginning in mid-summer, lavender globes of *Allium* 'Summer Beauty' glow as they hover over upright, dark green leaf stalks. This ornamental onion grows 18 inches tall and a little wider and is loved by bees, butterflies and other pollinators, but not rabbits or deer.

I think there is a law about including coneflowers in a sunny perennial border, and if there isn't there should be. *Echinacea purpurea* 'Magnus' has been a favorite of gardeners for many years. Its large, vibrant pink, daisy-like flowers bloom from mid-summer to early fall; the butterflies love them as much as gardeners do; and it is easy to grow.

Toward the back of the garden, *Eupatorium* 'Little Joe' stands up to 4 feet tall and 2 feet wide. Domes of light rosy-lavender flowers top stiff, straight stems from mid to late summer.

Another must-have is *Chrysanthemum* 'Becky'. Also referred to as *Leucanthemum* 'Becky', she's an old-fashioned favorite loved for her large, yellow-centered, pristine white flowers and all summer bloom. Plants grow at least 3 feet tall and nearly as wide.

*Panicum virgatum* 'Northwind' stands 4 to 6 feet tall to provide a lovely backdrop for earlier-blooming perennials and get its chance to star in the garden when its airy flower panicles glisten in autumn sunlight.

For all those mathematicians who have counted the perennials mentioned, I realize there are eleven listed. Gardeners know when it comes to plants there is always room for one more!

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