



FALL FLOWERING PERENNIALS

Is your perennial garden winding down along with the summer? It doesn't have to be that way. Now is a great time to spark up the border with some late-flowering perennials. Take a stroll through your favorite nursery to see the many hardy perennials that put on their best show of color from late summer into fall.

If daisy-like flowers are to your liking (but you want something other than mums), you have several excellent choices. Try some pink, purple, white or blue Asters for a pretty pop of color. They bloom with a profusion of small, yellow-centered, daisy-like flowers in late summer into fall, and they range in height from dwarf varieties just 12 inches tall to garden giants up to 4 feet in height.



Boltonia has a similar look, with pink or white daisy flowers on 3 to 4-foot plants. Most of the blooms are borne at the top part

of this plant, so choose a spot at the back of the border to plant it. Helenium (Sneezeweed) has larger, daisy-like flowers, about 2 to 2 ½" wide, and is available in a variety of autumnal shades, from rich gold to deep red-bronze. Equally attractive in the border or as a cut flower, most varieties grow from 2 to 3 feet tall.

For an upright, spiky effect, plant some Physostegia (Obedient Plant). This plant gets its common name from the tendency of its snapdragon-like flower spikes to stay in the position they are bent. Blooms start in August and continue through September in shades of white, lavender and pink. Physostegia is attractive to butterflies and makes an excellent cut flower, too. Some varieties are prone to spreading—for a truly well-behaved Obedient Plant check out Miss Manners, a white-blooming variety that stays neatly in clumps.

One of my personal late-blooming favorites is Ceratostigma plumbaginoides (Leadwort). This attractive plant grows only about 8 to 12" tall, and works well as a ground-cover or in the front of a border.

Its glossy green foliage is topped with gentian blue flowers from mid August into October, and as the season progresses the foliage takes on red tones—a stunning contrast to the blooms.

For a moist spot in the garden, consider planting some Eupatorium. These impressive plants grow very tall (up to 6 or 7'), and bear showy clusters of ageratum-like flowers from late summer through September. The variety Chocolate is a good one to try. Aptly named for its deep, rich, chocolate-brown foliage, it has contrasting clusters of white flowers on dark purple stems.



For a drier area, check out Heliopsis (False Sunflower). This long-blooming perennial is drought tolerant once established. It starts flowering in July and continues well into September, bringing brilliant yellow and gold shades into the flower border. Flowers attract butterflies and have a long vase life.

Sedum Autumn Joy, with its impressive dark pink flower heads and sturdy succulent foliage, is a fall classic in many gardens, as it deserves to be. Many other Sedum varieties are worthy of planting, too. Try Black Jack for its unusual black-purple foliage and contrasting bright pink flowers, or plant some Autumn Charm—it is a variegated variety edged in creamy yellow. Flowers are interesting, too, starting out white, turning pink, and finishing red by September.



Goldenrod (Solidago) is often falsely maligned for causing hay fever (because it blooms at the same time as the real culprit—ragweed), but it is a hardy and showy perennial that deserves a spot in any garden. Its flowers are a brilliant, golden yellow,

perfect for fall. They cut well, too, so add some to fall arrangements.

Don't overlook ornamental grasses. Many types are at their showiest at the end of the season. Try some Imperata Red Baron (Japanese Blood Grass). Its upright green foliage turns almost entirely red by season's end. Many Panicum (Switch Grass) and Miscanthus varieties turn reddish or orange in the fall. These grasses also flower in the fall—an added bonus.

If your shade garden is short on sizzle, spark it up with some late-flowering Monkshood (Aconitum). The showy flowers of these statuesque plants resemble those of Delphiniums in both color and form. Give them a site with rich, moist soil and light shade at the back of the border.

Japanese Anemones are beautiful flowers that also prefer a semi-shaded site. Their showy flowers start blooming in late

August to September and continue throughout the fall. The exquisite pink or white blooms may be single or double. They are borne profusely on wiry stems above handsome, dark green, clump-forming foliage.

Chelone (Turtlehead) is a long blooming perennial with robust pink to white snapdragon-like flowers on sturdy stems. Attractive to hummingbirds, it thrives in moist, partially shaded sites and grows 2 to 3' tall.

Trycirtis (Toad Lily) is a little-known perennial that deserves more attention. It bears its exotic, often spotted, orchid-like flowers in late August to September. It often sports unusual foliage as well. Check out Lightning Strike, with its gold-streaked foliage and spotted lavender flowers, or Gilt Edge for its creamy-edged green foliage and lavender-speckled flowers. Plant Toad Lilies close to the house or a walkway so you can enjoy their lovely flowers up close.