



THE PLANTER'S PALETTE PERENNIAL PICKS

Frequently, customers ask our staff which perennials they like best. With this in mind, I did an informal survey among some of our staff members to find out which are their favorites. Following are descriptions of the plants they chose and why they chose them.

SUN PERENNIALS

Wild Quinin (*Parthenium integrifolium*) is a little known but tough plant that fits well into a cottage garden or native plant setting. Its clusters of attractive, woolly white flowers resemble those of an ageratum. Blooms are borne on sturdy, 2-3' stems and continue throughout the summer, from June to September. Flowers are good for cutting to use in fresh or dried arrangements. The leathery dark green foliage is fragrant and rabbit-resistant, and it stays looking nice all season long. Grow in full sun in average, fertile, well-drained garden soil.

Calamintha nepeta nepeta (Calamint) is a delightful plant with delicate, soft bluish white flowers, prolifically produced. Its fine-textured foliage is mounding to about 12 to 15" tall, and it has

a lovely mint-like fragrance that is delightful to humans but unattractive to rabbits. This plant is an excellent choice for rock gardens, planted to soften the edges of a walkway or used as a filler plant between other perennials. Plant it in full sun to light shade in an area with very good drainage. If you're lucky, it may reseed.



Another long-blooming favorite is *Centranthus ruber* (Jupiter's Beard). This old-fashioned plant probably grew in Grandma's garden, and it deserves a place in yours as well. Grow it for its clusters of rose red, star-shaped flowers—they bloom profusely all summer long. Snip some blossoms to add to summer bouquets, too, as they make excellent cut flowers. Jupiter's Beard's neat, clump-forming, blue-green foliage gets about 2 to 3' tall and wide, and it mixes well with other perennials. It will reseed if allowed to, but most likely those seedlings will be welcomed. Best of all, this is not a fussy plant. It requires only a

sunny spot and average, well-drained soil to grow and thrive.

For non-stop color, it's hard to beat *Geranium 'Rozanne.'* This plant is truly a workhorse of the garden, flowering almost continuously from June until the first hard frost. Its violet-blue flowers are a striking color, and in the fall the deep green foliage turns a rich burgundy shade. This versatile plant grows 18-20" tall and is suitable for rock gardens or borders. It also performs well in planters and window boxes. It prefers moist, well-drained soil, and like most geraniums, benefits from some shade during the heat of the day.

Liatris (Gayfeather) is another staff favorite because of its tall, stately, upright habit and its bold standout color. Under good conditions, 'Floristan Violet' can grow up to 5' tall, and its showy spikes of rosy-purple bottlebrush-like flowers are frequently added to floral arrangements. It blooms from mid summer until fall over grassy foliage, and is great for adding height and color to any sunny border. As an added bonus, *Liatris* is attractive to butterflies. It is a drought tolerant plant that thrives in well-drained soil.

Another good choice for the back of the border is Malva (Hollyhock Mallow). As its common name implies, the flowers of this plant resemble those of a hollyhock. They are rose pink in color and borne in profusion on 3 to 4' plants, in June through August. Flowers are excellent for cutting, with sturdy, upright stems. Plants are bushy so give them lots of room. This is an excellent cottage garden plant but it can also find a place in a more formal border. It tends to reseed, and should be allowed to do so, as it is a short-lived perennial. Grow this plant in any sunny location in well-drained soil.

organic soil and shear it back after flowering to encourage fresh new growth.



SHADE PLANTS

For eye-catching foliage, check out Geranium 'Samobor,' also known as the Mourning Widow Geranium. Its scalloped green leaves feature large, deep purple dots in a circular pattern. The foliage on this plant is so striking that it is attractive whether in bloom or not, but when in flower, it is a perfect complement to the dainty, deep purple blossoms. Flowers are held on tall, wiry stems in May to June and grow 18 to 24" tall. Grow 'Samobor' in semi-shade to shade in moderately moist to dry,

Two varieties of Coral Bells (Heuchera) were highly recommended by staff: 'Obsidian' and 'Marmalade.' As its name implies, 'Obsidian' has gorgeous, very dark, near black, shiny foliage—so shiny that it almost appears polished. Contrasting, creamy white flowers are an added bonus. 'Marmalade,' an attractive and unusual variety, with shiny, undulating oak-like leaves in shades of green, umber and sienna, with burgundy undersides. Its delicate, reddish, bell-like flowers are borne on wiry stems in May to July. Both 'Marmalade' and 'Obsidian' grow to about 10 inches tall and fit neatly into almost any shade garden. Coral Bells grow best in semi-shade in moist, well-drained soil, amended with organic matter.

makes the list for its exotic, lotus like lavender flowers and graceful, long, smooth matte-green leaves with white undersides. Foliage grows 14 to 17" tall and plants fill in quickly, forming graceful, arching, 3 to 3 1/2' mounds. Like all Hostas, this variety prefers rich soil in shady situations.

For drama in the shade garden, try Cimicifuga 'Pink Spike' (Snakeroot). This tall, statuesque beauty features impressive, divided deep purple-bronze, spicy-scented foliage, topped by soft pink bottlebrush flowers in late summer. Its leaves are critter resistant and its flowers are attractive to butterflies and excellent for cutting. Give this plant a cool, moist spot with plenty of organic matter to keep it happy and healthy.

On the opposite end of the size scale, Corydalis lutea (Yellow Corydalis) is a diminutive plant with delicate, gray-green foliage. Dainty, tubular yellow flowers are produced most prolifically in May, but continue blooming throughout the season, right up until frost. Even better, this plant happily reseeds itself and looks delightful tucked between more boldly textured perennials. Best of all, it grows well in dry shade.

Hosta 'Okasaki Special'