

Gardening with Long Blooming Perennials

Perennials are an excellent choice for gardeners looking for plants that return year after year, providing beauty and structure to the landscape. Unlike annuals, which complete their life cycle in one season, perennials develop strong root systems, allowing them to survive winter dormancy and regrow in spring. Many perennials bloom for a short period, but by selecting long-blooming varieties and designing thoughtfully, you can enjoy color throughout the season. Combining perennials with different bloom times or incorporating annuals or evergreens can ensure continuous color in your garden.

Choosing and Designing Your Perennial Garden

Selecting the right perennials begins with understanding your climate, soil, and sunlight conditions. Choose plants suited to your USDA zone and soil type, whether clay, sandy, or loamy. Consider your garden's sun exposure, full sun plants need six or more hours of direct light a day, part sun/shade varieties require four to six hours a day, and full shade plants thrive with less than four hours a day. In warmer zones, the afternoon sun can be intense, so some full sun plants may need partial shade.

A well-designed garden has layers and structure. Place taller perennials at the back of borders, medium-height plants in the middle, and shorter ones at the front. This creates depth and ensures all plants receive adequate light. Mixing foliage colors and textures, such as variegated leaves, blue-green tones, and golden hues, adds visual interest. Grouping plants with similar water and light needs simplifies maintenance, while incorporating pathways and edging elements enhances both aesthetics and functionality. Consider incorporating native plants, which are well-adapted to local conditions and require less maintenance.

Caring for Your Perennials

Proper care ensures healthy plants and extended blooming. Prepare the soil with compost or organic matter to improve drainage and fertility. Plant perennials at the same depth as in their containers and water them thoroughly after planting. Mulch around plants to retain moisture, suppress weeds, and regulate soil temperature. Fertilize in early spring and late summer using a balanced fertilizer to promote growth and flowering.

Many perennials benefit from deadheading, or removing spent flowers, to encourage additional blooms. Some varieties, such as coneflowers and salvia, will re-bloom if cut back after their first flush of flowers. Over time, perennials can become overcrowded, reducing flowering and vigor. Divide perennials every few years to maintain healthy growth, spring bloomers should be divided in fall and fall bloomers in spring. Some perennials, like daylilies and hostas, can be divided easily, while others, such as peonies, prefer to remain undisturbed.

If you choose to not cut back your perennials in winter, they can provide a beneficial habitat for insects and birds, adding ecological value to your garden. However, cutting back spent growth in late fall or early spring prevents diseases and keeps the garden tidy.

Common Pests and Diseases

While perennials are generally hardy, they can be affected by pests and diseases. Regular monitoring and prompt action help keep plants healthy.

- **Aphids:** These small, sap-sucking insects cause distorted growth. Control them with insecticidal soap or by encouraging natural predators like ladybugs, lacewings, or praying mantis.
- **Slugs and Snails:** Common in moist environments, they chew on leaves and stems. Use barriers or ducks, handpick them, or apply organic baits to manage their population.
- **Powdery Mildew:** A fungal disease that appears as white powdery spots on leaves, often in humid conditions. Improve air circulation and apply fungicides as needed.
- **Japanese Beetles:** These metallic-green beetles skeletonize leaves, reducing plant health. Handpick them early in the morning or use traps to control infestations.
- **Fungal Leaf Spots & Rust:** These diseases thrive in excessive moisture, causing weakened plants and discolored foliage. To prevent spread, avoid overhead watering, ensure proper plant spacing for airflow, and promptly remove affected leaves.

With the right plant selection, proper care, and proactive pest management, your perennial garden can provide long-lasting beauty and enjoyment season after season. Whether you choose native species, pollinator-friendly plants, or drought-tolerant varieties, a well-planned perennial garden will enhance your landscape for years to come.

Long Blooming Perennial Plant List

Sun Perennials	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Achillea - Yarrow	X	X		
Agapanthus – Lily of the Nile	X	X	X	
Agastache – Blue Star	X	X		
Allium	X	X		
Amsonia	X	X		
Anemone - Windflower	X	X		
Aquilegia	X			
Armeria - Seadrift	X			
Arabis - Rockcress	X	X		
Aster	X	X	X	
Aubrieta - Rockcress	X			X
Baptisia – Wild Indigo	X	X		
Bletilla – Ground Orchid	X	X		
Buddleia – Butterfly Bush		X	X	
Campanula – Bellflower	X	X	X	
Coreopsis – Tickseed	X	X	X	
Corydalis	X	X		
Crocoshia		X	X	
Daffodil / Tulip	X	X		
Dianthus – Carnation	X	X		
Digitalis – Foxglove	X	X		
Echinacea – Coneflower	X	X	X	
Eremurus – Foxtail Lily	X	X		
Erysimum – Wallflower	X	X		
Euphorbia	X	X	X	X
Fuchsia – Hardy	X	X	X	
Gaillardia – Blanket Flower	X	X		
Gaura – Wandflower	X	X	X	
Geranium – Perennial Types		X	X	
Geum	X	X	X	
Gypsophila – Baby’s Breath	X	X		
Hemerocallis – Daylily Re-Blooming		X	X	
Iberis – Candytuft	X	X	X	
Iris - Bearded, Re-Bloomer		X	X	
Kniphofia – Red Hot Poker		X	X	
Lavandula - Lavender		X	X	
Leucanthemum – Shasta Daisy		X	X	
Lilium – Asiatic / Oriental		X	X	
Lobelia – Cardinal Flower		X	X	
Monarda – Beebalm		X	X	
Nepeta – Catmint	X	X	X	
Penstemon – Beardtongue	X	X		
Peonies	X	X		
Perovskia – Russian Sage		X	X	
Phlox – Garden Phlox	X	X		
Phygelius – Cape Fuchsia		X	X	
Platycodon – Ballon Flower		X		
Rudbeckia		X	X	
Salvia – Garden Sage	X	X	X	
Saponaria	X	X		
Scabiosa – Butterfly Flower		X	X	
Scilla - Squill	X			
Sedum		X	X	
Solidago – Goldenrod		X	X	
Thalictrum – Meadowsweet		X	X	
Tiarella – Foam Flower	X	X		
Tradescantia - Spiderwort		X	X	
Tricyrtis – Toad Lily		X	X	
Verbena		X	X	
Veronica – Speedwell	X	X	X	
Shade Perennials	Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
Accanthus – Bear’s Breach		X	X	
Actea – Bugbane		X	X	
Ajuga – Bugleweed	X	X		X
Aralia - Sun King	X			
Arisaema – Jack in the Pulpit	X	X		
Aruncus – Goat Beard		X		
Astilbe		X	X	
Bergenia	X			X
Brunnera	X	X		
Cyclamen coum – Hardy	X			X
Dicentra – Bleeding Heart	X	X		
Epimedium – Bishop’s Hat		X	X	
Ferns - Hardy	X	X	X	X
Gentiana		X	X	
Hellebores	X	X		X
Heuchera – Coral Bells	X	X		
Hosta		X		
Ligularia – Leopard Plants		X	X	
Polygonatum – Solomon’s Seal	X	X		
Trillium	X			