

# Perennial Bloom Calendar

Designing for Four Seasons of Flowers

## Dreaming of a garden filled with nearly never-ending flowers?

With a little planning, your garden can have blooms almost all year long. Unlike summer annuals that bloom consistently over many months, perennials generally have a window of time when their flower flushes appear. By following this guide, you can design a perennial garden that will provide four seasons of interest.

Visit a local gardening center in spring and you will find a myriad of perennial plants all in full flower. If you were to purchase a selection of these and plant them at home, chances are you would have lots of flowers for a few weeks or so, but then when summer rolled around your yard would have lost a lot of its bloom. That's because for the most part, the showiest, most eye-catching plants in the nursery are for sale during their **peak bloom time**. If you shop a few times throughout the seasons, you'll see different plants blooming at different times. With a little planning, you can design a garden with four seasons of flowers. This guide aims to help. We have selected a number of common perennial flowering plants and mapped out their general flowering times.



**Even though each plant has its own common bloom time, there are many factors that affect when perennial flowers will appear:**

**Seasonal issues:** Every season is different. If, for instance, we have a very cold spring, this will probably push back the bloom times of many early season flowers. Alternatively, if we have a very warm spring, many plants will bloom early. A hot, dry summer with drought conditions may also cause a change in bloom times.

**Age of Plant:** More mature plants tend to put out more blooms over a longer period.

**Culture:** Following the recommendations for amount of sun, water, and fertilizer is very important to keep perennials blooming their best. If a sun-loving plant is put in too much shade, it will not perform well. If a plant does not get the amount of water or nutrients it needs it also will not perform.

**Extending Bloom Times:** Sometimes plants will put out another flush of flowers if they are sheared back after the first blooms fade. Plant tags will usually tell you if this is a good idea. Deadheading spent flowers can prolong blooming almost indefinitely. Perennials also may need to be thinned or divided every few years to keep them in top form.

**Varietal Differences:** Sometimes there are many species of the same plant that will have different qualities and bloom times. Check the tags or ask if you are unsure about when a particular plant is supposed to bloom.

**Questions?** We're always happy to help. Stop by the Information desk or email us at

[info@portlandnursery.com](mailto:info@portlandnursery.com)

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## Bloom Times for Perennials

Plant Name	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Achillea (Yarrow)												
Aconitum* (Monkshood)												
Actea /Cimicifuga* (Bugbane)												
Agastache (Anise hyssop)												
Anemone* (Japanese)												
Aquilegia (Columbine)												
Arabis** (Rock cress)												
Aster												
Aubrieta												
Aurinia** (Basket-of-Gold)												
Bellis (English Daisy)												
Brunnera*												
Campanula (Bellflower)												
Centaurea												
Chrysanthemum												
Coreopsis												
Corydalis*												
Crocsmia												
Dahlia												
Delphinium												
Dianthus (Pinks)												
Dicentra* (Bleeding Heart)												
Digitalis* (Foxglove)												
Echinacea (Coneflower)												
Erigeron (Fleabane)												
Eryngium (Sea Holly)												
Erysimum** (Wallflower)												
Fuchsia*												
Gaillardia (Blanket Flower)												
Gaura												
Geranium (Cranesbill)												
Geum												
Helenium (Sneezeweed)												

Plant Name	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Helianthemum***(Sun Rose)												
Helleborus*, **												
Hemerocallis (Daylily)												
Iberis** (Candytuft)												
Leucanthemum (Daisy)												
Lithodora**												
Lupinus (Lupine)												
Monarda (Bee Balm)												
Myosotis*(Forget-Me-Not)												
Nepeta (Catmint)												
Paeonia (Peony)												
Papaver (Poppy)												
Penstemon												
Perovskia (Russian Sage)												
Phlox (short)												
Phlox (tall)												
Phygelius (Cape Fuchsia)												
Primula* (Primrose)												
Rudbeckia (Black-Eyed Susan)												
Salvia												
Saxifraga*, **												
Scabiosa (Pincushion Flower)												
Thalictrum* (Meadow Rue)												
Tricyrtis* (Toad Lily)												
Veronica (short)												
Veronica (tall)												
Viola*												

**Darkest-colored** cells indicate main bloom time. **Lighter-colored** cells indicate start, finish, or sporadic bloom times.

\*Indicates shade tolerance

\*\*Indicates evergreen plant

# Perennials for sun

## Beginner's List (low maintenance)

Amsonia  
 Artemisia lactiflora 'Guizhou'  
 Artemisia 'Silver Mound'  
 Aubretia, Rock Cress  
 Aster 'Purple Dome'  
 Astrantia, Masterwort  
 Campanula 'Birch's Hybrid',  
 Bellflower  
 Campanula persicifolia, Bellflower  
 Coreopsis verticillata, Tickseed  
 Euphorbia ch. 'Humpty Dumpty'  
 Gaillardia, Blanket Flower  
 Hibiscus moscheutos  
 Hemerocalis repeat bloomers,  
 Daylily  
*Iberis*, Candytuft  
*Leucanthemum*, Shasta Daisy  
*Nepeta x faassenii*, Catmint  
*Pervoskia*, Russian Sage  
*Rudbeckia fulgida*, *R. nitida*- Brown Eye

## Perennials for Rock Walls (spillers)

\* tolerates drought when established  
 \*Aurinia saxatilis, Basket of Gold  
 Aubrieta  
 Campanula carpatica, C. gargantica  
 \*Cerastium tomentosum, Snow in summer  
 \*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides, Plumbago  
 \*Chiastophyllum oppositifolium  
 \*Delospermum, Ice plant  
 Diascia, Twinspur  
 \*Erigeron karvinskianus, Fleabane  
 \*Euphorbia rigida  
 \*Helianthemum, Sunrose  
 \* Iberis sempervirens, Candytuft  
 \*Lithodora diffusa  
 \*Origanum 'Kent Beauty'  
 Phlox subulata, Creeping Phlox  
 \*Sedum  
 \*Sempervivum, Hens and Chicks

## Fragrant Perennials

Aquilegia 'Chocolate Soldiers'  
 Agastache sp (foliage)  
 Berlandiera lyrata  
 Cosmos atrosanguineus  
 Dianthus sp.  
 Echinacea 'Fragrant Angel'  
 Gladiolus callianthus  
 Hemerocalis flava,  
 'Tardida'  
 Hesperis  
 Lily, Oriental & Trumpet  
 Narcissus 'Pheasant's Eye'  
 Oenothera fragrans

## Fall Bloomers

Anemone japonica,  
 Windflower  
 Achellia, Yarrow  
 Aster sp.  
 Boltonia, False Starwort  
 Crocosmia, Montbretia  
 Dendranthema, Mum  
 Eupatorium purpureum,  
 Joe Pye Weef  
 Helenium sp.,  
 Sneezeweed  
 Helianthus sp, Perennial  
 Sunflowers  
 Heliopsis  
 Kniphofia  
 Lavatera, Tree Mallow  
 Leucanthemum, Shasta  
 daisy  
 Pervoskia, Russian Sage  
 Rudbeckia sp., Black eye  
 Susan  
 Salvia sp.  
 Schizostylis  
 Sedum sp

## Long Bloomers

Achillea  
 Anthemis  
 Campanula port.  
 Centranthus ruber  
 Chiastophyllum  
 Coreopsis  
 Dianthus deltoids  
 Erigeron  
 Erodium  
 Gaillardia  
 Gaura  
 Geranium endressii,  
 G. sanguineum  
 Gypsophila  
 paniculata  
 Helenium autumnale  
 Helianthemum  
 Iberis  
 Lavetera  
 Linaria purpurea  
 Oenothera sp.  
 Phlomis fruticosa  
 Phygelius  
 Rudbeckia fulgida  
 Salvia  
 Scabiosa  
 Stachys

## Some Self Seeders

Aquilegia  
 Aster nova-belgii  
 Bellis  
 Campanula (several  
 sp)  
 Cephalaria  
 Centranthus rubber  
 Digitalis  
 Euphorbia characias  
 Hesperis matronalis  
 Lychnis coronaria  
 Papaver  
 Sisyinchium  
 X Solidaster

# Perennials for Shade

## Beginner's List (low maintenance)

Acanthus mollis, Bear's Breech  
Alchemilla mollis, Ladies Mantel  
Aruncus dioicus, Goat's Beard  
Bergenia, Elephant's Ear  
Brunnera macrophylla  
Cimicifuga racemosa, Bugbane  
Corydalis lutea  
Dicentra, Bleeding Hearts  
Epimedium  
Fuchsia, Hardy Fuchsia  
Helleborus orientalis,  
Lentenrose  
Heuchera  
Hosta, Plantain Lily  
Lamium, Dead Nettle  
Lirope, Lilyturf  
Ophiopogon, Mondo grass  
Podophyllum hexandrum

## Fall Interest

Acanthus mollis, flws, lvs  
Actea, Doll's Eyes, berries  
Amaryllis belladonna, flws  
Anemone japonica, flws  
Aster, divaricatus, flws  
Begonia grandis, flws, lvs  
Colchicum, flws  
Crocus sativus, flws  
Cyclamen hederifolium, flws  
Dicentra 'Adrian Bloom'  
Dicentra scandens, flws  
Epimedium rubrum, lvs  
Fuchsia, flws  
Hakenochloa, lvs  
Kirengishoma, flws

## Long Bloomers

Acanthus sp., Bear's Breech  
Alchemilla, Ladie's Mantel  
Alstromeriasp, Peruvian Lily  
Anemone sp., Windflower  
Aruncus dioicus, Goat's Beard  
Astrantia, Masterwort  
Corydalis elata  
Dicentra formosa, Western Bleeding Heart  
Fuchsia  
Meconopsis cambrica, Welch Popy  
Myosotis, Forget-Me-Not  
Ompheloides, Navelwort  
Tradescantia, Spiderwort  
Symphytum, Comfrey

## Self seeders

Ajuga reptans, Bugelweed  
Alchemilla mollis, Ladie's Mantel  
Anemone japonica, Japanese Windflower  
Begonia grandis  
Brunnera macrophylla  
Corydalis lutea  
Dicentra formosana, Western Bleeding Heart  
Digitalis, Foxglove  
Filipendula ulmaria,  
Meadowsweet  
Iris foetidus  
Lamium maculatum, Dead Nettle  
Myosotis, Forget-Me-Not  
Polemonium, Jacob's Ladder  
Primula, Primrose

## Half day Sun Perennials

Alstromeria  
Astrantia  
Aqueligia  
Campanula  
Digitalis  
Eupatorium  
Euphorbia amygdaloides  
Geranium  
Hemerocalis  
Heuchera, dark leaf forms  
Iris  
Lobelia cardinalis,  
Lobelia siphatica  
Narcissus  
Phlox sublata

## Evergreen Ferns

Blechnum spicant Deer Fern  
Cheilanthes sinuate Wavy Cloak Fern]  
Cyrtomium sp. Holly Ferns  
Dryopteris champinonii  
Champion Fern  
Dryopteris cycadina Shaggy Shield Fern  
Dryopteris erythrosa Autumn Fern  
Dryopteris filix mas 'Barnseii'  
Barne's Narrow Fern  
Dryopteris wallichiana  
Wallich's Wood Fern  
Polypodium glycyrrhiza  
Licorice Fern  
Polystichum arcostichoides  
Christmas Fern  
Polystichum munitum  
Western Sword Fern  
Polystichum polyblepharum  
Tassel Fern

## Keeping tender perennials in the Northwest

A tender perennial is defined as a perennial, a plant that can live for many years, that is not winter hardy (will die in winter in one's particular climate). Sometimes these plants are called annuals for the sake of simplicity, but they are not true annuals, which cannot live more than one year. This includes pelargoniums (so-called annual geraniums), many tropical ferns, tuberous begonias, some impatiens, fuchsias, tender sages, and others.

Some even broaden this category to include tender shrubs such as hibiscus or citrus, but they should not properly be called perennials. For simplicity, here we will emphasize the most popular types of plants.

The basic concept of overwintering tender perennials is to manipulate the environment of the plant just enough so that it can behave like a perennial instead of an annual. The most important point within this is minimum temperature exposure. The gardener should start monitoring their plants in late September to mid-October, watching for night temperatures that are coming close to freezing. Take those steps to protect your plant before the risk of a real freeze. The Portland area is usually considered to be USDA hardiness zone 8, which is a reference to how cold it gets here. For those perennials that are almost hardy here (USDA zone 9), sometimes a cold frame is enough, or a minimally heated enclosed environment.

Some pelargoniums, fuchsias, and many assorted zone 9 plants can be kept in a semi-protected spot most of the winter in a container, but be ready to move them to a frost-free environment in case of a severe winter storm. Such a move should be temporary, just so the plants are not subject to very low temperatures. Pelargoniums, for example, can handle frost but not heavy freezes the way the (hardy) geraniums can.

Some might wonder why you should not just move the plant in to the house for the winter, growing it like any other houseplant, and this often happens. The end-results are mixed, depending on the conditions the plants receive and the types of plants used this way. Keep in mind that if you keep a sun-loving plant at room temperature all winter in a relatively dark living room, it will probably live and try to grow, but the growth will be very weak and floppy, resulting in an unsatisfactory appearance. Also, plants under such stresses can have exaggerated weakness to over- or under-watering.

A cool but frost free greenhouse is probably ideal for most of the plants that fall in this category.

That said, most of us don't have a greenhouse, so... Here are a few tips on individual plant types and ways to keep them over the winter. Other areas for overwintering tender plants include garages, basements, and covered or enclosed porches.

**Pelargoniums:** If you choose to overwinter Pelargoniums inside, here are some tips. Zonal and other such geraniums can be kept in a normal brightly lit indoor location. They would prefer it cool, but don't need it. What they absolutely need is to dry fully between waterings. Some even go so far as to water them no more than 2-3 times all winter, though the goal here is not to speak in absolutes. Some people leave them outside in a covered (no rain)

location for the winter, and only move them in during severe freezes. This can be successful as well, as long as the plant is not too wet and you do catch it before the freezes.

As an alternative, the gardener can cut back their pelargoniums hard, and store them in the basement or garage, still keeping the soil mostly dry. Scented geraniums tend to make fairly good houseplants.

Fuchsias: Fuchsias are challenging to overwinter without a greenhouse environment. Note that a sunroom or enclosed porch can work pretty well, but a normal living room style of location usually leads to a very sparse, unattractive plant that may not be worth your while. If you have a greenhouse or similar environment, then simply keep them cool but not freezing, moderately (not fully) dry between waterings, and pinch any excessive growth. Some fertilizer in spring will perk them up nicely.

Ferns and Asparagus ferns: Most tender ferns make fine indoor bright light houseplants. They should be kept moist but not soggy, and don't be too surprised if they do some rapid shedding of leaves shortly after being moved. They will generally survive this and re-grow well given time. Asparagus ferns (not edible asparagus) can also make good houseplants, but can handle things a little cooler than some ferns, and prefer it somewhat brighter as well.

Alternately, you can let tender fuchsia go mostly dormant until they lose their leaves, then cut them back to the basic woody structure and store the pots in a cool, frost free area, such as a basement. Water sparingly.

Tuberous Begonias: Allow plants to naturally turn yellow in autumn weather, then cut off all the above ground growth. Dig up the tuber, dry it, and store it dry in a cool but frost free place, such as a basement. In late April or so, replant the tubers in fresh soil and regrow for a new season.

For further reading, there is a great article on this subject on the website belonging to Fine Gardening Magazine. It can be found at <http://www.finegardening.com/how-to/articles/overwintering-tender-plants.aspx?nterms=74880>.

Alternately, go to Fine Gardening's website, click to How-To tab, then look for the article under the overwintering section.