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
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**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’
- Aurelia, Rock Cress
- Aster ‘Purple Dome’
- Astra ‘Masterwort’
- Campanula ‘Birch’s Hybrid’
- Bellflower
- Campanula persicifolia, Bellflower
- Coreopsis verticillata, Tickseed
- Euphorbia ch. ‘Humpty Dumpty’
- Gaillardia, Blanket Flower
- Hibiscus moscheutos
- Hemerocallis repeat bloomers, Daylily
- Iberis, Candytuft
- Leucanthemum, Shasta Daisy
- Nepeta x faassenii, Catmint
- Pervoskia, Russian Sage
- Rudbeckia fulgida, R. nitida- Brown Eye

## Fragrant Perennials
- Aquilegia ‘Chocolate Soldiers’
- Agastache sp (foliage)
- Berlandiera lyrata
- Cosmos atrosanguineus
- Dianthus sp.
- Echinacea ‘Fragrant Angel’
- Gladiolus callianthus
- Hemerocallis flava, ‘Tardita’?
- Hesperis
- Lily, Oriental & Trumpet
- Narcissus ‘Phesant’s Eye’
- Oenothera fragrans

## Long Bloomers
- Achillea
- Anthemis
- Campanula port.
- Centranthus ruber
- Chiastruthium
- Coreopsis
- Dianthus deltoids
- Erigeron
- Erodium
- Gaillardia
- Gaura
- Geranium endressii, G. sanguineum
- Gypsophila paniculata
- Helianthemum
- Iberis
- Lavatera
- Linaria purpurea
- Oenothera sp.
- Phlomis fruticosa
- Phygellus
- Rudbeckia fulgida
- Salvia
- Scabiosa
- Stachys

## 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
- *Chastashyllum oppositifolium
- *Delospermum, Ice plant
- Diascia, Twispur
- *Erigeron karvinskianus, Fleabane
- *Euphorbia rigida
- *Helianthemum, Sunrose
- *Iberis sempervirens, Candytuft
- *Lithodora diffusa
- *Origanum ‘Kent Beauty’
- Phlox subulata, Creeping Phlox
- *Sedum
- *Sempervivum, Hens and Chicks

## Fall Bloomers
- Anemone japonica, Windflower
- Achellia, Yarrow
- Aster sp.
- Boltonia, False Starwort
- Crocosmia, Montbretia
- Dendranthema, Mum
- Eupatorium purpureum, Joe Pye Weef
- Helianthemum 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.

## Some Self Seeders
- Aquilegia
- Aster nova-belgii
- Bellis
- Campanula (several sp)
- Cephalaria
- Centranthus ruber
- Digitalis
- Euphorbia characias
- Hesperis matronalis
- Lychnis coronaria
- Papaver
- Sisyrinchium
- 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
- Helieborus orientalis, Lentenrose
- Heuchera
- Hosta, Plantain Lily
- Lamium, Dead Nettle
- Liriope, Lilyturf
- Ophiopogon, Mondo grass
- Podophyllum hexandrum

## Fall Interest
- Acanthus mollis, flws, lvs
- Actaea, 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 spectabilis, flws
- Epimedium rubrum, lvs
- Fuchsia, flws
- Hakonechloa, lvs
- Kirengishoma, flws

## Evergreen Ferns
- Blechnum spicant Deer Fern
- Chellanthus sinuate Wavy Cloak Fern
- Cyrtomium sp. Holly Ferns
- Dryopteris champonii
- Champion Fern
- Dryopteris cycadina Shaggy Shield Fern
- Dryopteris erythrosa Autumn Fern
- Dryopteris filix mas ‘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

## Long Bloomers
- Acanthus sp., Bear’s Breech
- Alchemilla, Lady’s Mantel
- Alstroemeriasp, 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, Lady’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
- Alstroemeria
- Astrantia
- Aquilegia
- Campanula
- Digitalis
- Eupatorium
- Euphorbia amygdaloides
- Geranium
- Hemerocallis
- Heuchera, dark leaf forms
- Iris
- Lobelia cardinalis, Lobelia siphatica
- Narcissus
- Phlox sublata
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 loose 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.