

Perennial Species for Containers

OH 70

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Choosing the proper container, growing mix, and culture is important for success with growing herbaceous perennials in containers, and has been covered elsewhere. Also important of course is the proper selection of perennial species and cultivars.

Choose plants that will grow in proportion to the container, both in girth and height. Plants should fill out the pot during the season, and be no more than 2 to 3 times as high as the container. If plants are too small for a container, they won't fill it during the growing season, so may stay too wet. If too short, they'll look odd, and if too tall may need staking or be top heavy and blow over. If they fit these size requirements, many perennials (in addition to the list below) may be used in containers.

If using several plants together, choose ones that not only look good, but won't crowd each other out. A low spreader might be okay, trailing over the side of a pot, but other aggressive plants may kill out the weaker ones. You may also consider plants to combine that bloom in different months. And of course combine plants with similar cultural and soil needs.

Another solution to having bloom through the season, especially if plant combinations in large containers aren't possible, is to use the "pot in pot" method. Grow a variety of perennials in any sort of pots, even inexpensive and unattractive nursery pots. Then sink these into wider, more attractive pots. Fill in with some organic material such as potting mix or compost, which will hold moisture and cover the inner, unattractive pot. In this way plants can be rotated out when done bloom, and others in. These perennials in pots can then be all sunk in the garden the end of the season for overwintering. If aquatic plants, these may be treated as annuals, or overwintered in tubs of water, or just kept moist, in cool spaces indoors. Bulbs can be potted in the fall, sunk in the ground, the pots dug in spring when shoots emerge, and then the pots sunk into larger containers as above. Tender bulbs may need more protection over winter (see other references for bulb choices).

For the following perennial groupings, some species and cultivars may be shorter and more suited for containers. Others not listed may have dwarf cultivars as well that would be appropriate such as with *Boltonia*, *Echinacea*, *Monarda* and *Solidago*. Alpines are suited to trough gardens, and are not covered here. Keep in mind above points when matching cultivars to pot size. Some late season perennials such as *Aster novae-angliae*, *Helianthus* and *Solidago* may be pruned once or more early in the season to result in shorter plants more suited to containers. Those marked (psh) tolerate part shade better than most, although may bloom best in sun (especially in northern climates).

Perennials--spring

Adonis

Alchemilla (psh)

Anaphalis

Aquilegia (psh)

Anaphalis

Aubretia

Aurinia

Bellis

Bergenia (psh)

Convallaria (psh)

Dianthus

Dicentra spectabilis

(psh)

Disporum (psh)

Doronicum

Euphorbia

Helleborus (psh)

Heuchera (psh)

Iberis

Phlox (some) (psh)

Polygonatum (psh)

Pulmonaria (psh)

Ranunculus

Thymus

Tiarella (psh)

Trollius

Uvularia (psh)

Perennials--summer

Achillea

Anthemis

Armeria
Astilbe (psh)
Campanula
Centaurea
Centranthus
Cerastium
Coreopsis
Dicentra eximia (psh)
Erigeron
Euphorbia
Gaillardia
Gaura
Geranium
Geum (psh)
Gillenia (psh)
Helianthemum (psh)
Hemerocallis
Jasione
Leucanthemum
Liatris
Lobelia (psh)
Lysimachia (psh)
Malva (psh)
Nepeta (psh)
Oenothera
Papaver
Penstemon (psh)
Platycodon (psh)
Persicaria (psh)
Salvia (some)
Scabiosa
Sempervivum
Stokesia
Symphytum (psh)
Tradescantia (psh)
Verbena
Veronica

**Perennials--late summer,
early fall**

Aster novi-belgii
Aster, dwarf cultivars
Ceratostigma
Chelone (psh)
Chrysanthemum
Eryngium
Limonium
Perovskia
Physostegia
Rudbeckia
Sedum (and related)
Solidago, dwarf cultivars

Perennials--foliage

Ajuga (psh)
Artemisia
Heuchera (psh)
Hosta (psh)
Liriope (psh)
Persicaria (psh)
Pulmonaria (psh)
Stachys
Tricyrtis (psh)

Ornamental Grasses

(generally 1-3' unless noted)
Arrhenatherum
Calamagrostis (3-4')
Carex
Chasmanthium
Deschampsia
Elymus
Festuca (under 1')
Hakonechloa
Helictotrichon
Imperata
Molinia

Panicum (3-4')
Pennisetum
Phalaris

Aquatics

Acorus (e) (w)
Caltha (w)
Carex (w)
Chelone (w)
Cyperus (e)
Eichhornia (f)
Iris (some) (w)
Iris pseudacorus (e)
Iris versicolor (e)
Lemna (Duckweed)(f)
Lobelia (w)
Lysimachia (w)
Nasturium (watercress) (e)
Nelumbo (e)
Nymphoides (e)
Osmunda (w)
Phalaris (e) (w)
Pistia (f)
Pontederia (e)
Primula (w)
Sagittaria (e)
Salvinia (f)
Sarracenia (w)
Saururus (e)
Thalia (e)
Tiarella (w)
Trollius (w)
Typha (e)
Zantedeschia (w)

f=floating, e=emergent, roots in
soil below water, w=wet, boggy
soils