



University of Vermont Extension

Department of Plant and Soil Science

Northern Drought Resistant Plants

OH 73

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With as much as 1/3 of the country under drought conditions of various levels recently, and another 1/3 in a drought watch zone, many gardeners are anxious about the impact of this on their gardening and landscapes. There are practices they may follow concerning wise water use and practices, saving or recycling water, and cultural practices. Then there is the choice of plants more resistant to such droughts.

If such droughts aren't too severe, or for too long a period, it may just be best to weather the extreme conditions. Most established herbaceous perennials and woody plants will survive some water stress, just perhaps not growing or flowering as well. But if such a drought in your area is more severe, or frequent, or you're tired of the extra watering even if it is available, tougher plants may be called for. Most such lists to date are for arid climates, such as the southwest, or Texas. Below are a few drought resistant plants you might consider for northern landscapes, but they aren't cactus--they will still need some occasional water, just not as much as many others not listed.

Annuals, Biennials, Bulbs (most spring flowering)

amaranth	marigold
baby's breath (annual)	Mexican sunflower (<i>Tithonia</i>)
begonia (wax leaf)	morning glory
calendula	periwinkle (annual vinca)
canna	petunia
cosmos	phlox (annual)
dianthus (annual pink)	purple fountain grass (<i>Pennisetum</i>)
digitalis	rose moss (<i>Portulaca</i>)
dusty miller	spider flower (<i>Cleome</i>)
flowering tobacco (<i>Nicotiana</i>)	statice (<i>Limonium</i>)
four o'clocks	strawflower
gazania	sweet alyssum
geranium	verbena
gloriosa daisy (annual <i>Rudbeckia</i>)	zinnia (Profusion series especially)
lantana	

Perennials, Grasses (G)

USDA hardiness zones will vary with species and cultivar

<i>Achillea</i> (Yarrow)	<i>Calamagrostis</i> (Feather Reed Grass, G)
<i>Agastache</i> (Anise Hyssop)	<i>Calluna</i> (Heather)
<i>Alcea</i> (Mallow)	<i>Carex</i> (Sedge, G)
<i>Amsonia</i> (Blue Stars)	<i>Chrysogonum</i> (Goldenstar)
<i>Artemisia</i> (Wormwood)	<i>Coreopsis</i> (Tickseed)
<i>Asclepias</i> (Butterfly Flower)	<i>Delosperma</i> (Hardy Ice Plant)
<i>Baptisia</i> (False Indigo)	<i>Dianthus</i> (Pinks)

Echinacea (Coneflower)
Erianthus (Plume Grass, 6)
Festuca (Blue Fescue, G)
Fragaria (Strawberry)
Gaillardia (Blanket Flower)
Gaura (Wandflower)
Geranium (*sanguineum*, Perennial G.)
Gypsophila (Baby's Breath)
Helleborus (Hellebore)
Hemerocallis (Daylily)
Hosta (Plantain Lily, shade)
Lamium (Dead Nettle)
Lavandula (Lavender)
Liatris (Blazing Star)
Lupinus (Lupine)
Miscanthus (Eulalia, G)
Nepeta (Catmint)

Oenothera (Evening Primrose)
Panicum (Switch Grass, G)
Papaver (Poppy)
Pennisetum (Foxtail Grass, G)
Paeonia (Peony)
Penstemon (Beard tongue)
Perovskia (Russian Sage)
Phlox (*subulata*, Ground P.)
Rudbeckia (Black eyed Daisy)
Salvia (Perennial Sage)
Sedum (Sedum)
Sempervivum (Hens and Chicks)
Stachys (Lamb's Ears)
Thymus (Thyme)
Verbascum (Mullein)
Vinca (Periwinkle)
Yucca (Adam's Needle)

Shrubs, Vines (V) (E=evergreen)

Aristolochia (Dutchman's Pipe, V)
Aronia (Red Chokeberry)
Buddleia (Butterfly Bush)
Campsis (Trumpetcreeper, V)
Caryopteris (Bluemist Spirea)
Chaenomeles (Flowering Quince)
Clematis (Sweet Autumn Clematis, V)
Clethra (Carolina Allspice)
Cotoneaster (Cotoneaster, E)
Cytisus (Scotch Broom, E)
Hamameles (Witch Hazel)

Itea (Virginia Sweetspire)
Juniperus (Juniper, E)
Lonicera (Honeysuckle, V)
Microbiota (Russian Arborvitae, E)
Myrica (Bayberry)
Parthenocissus (Virginia creeper, V.)
Potentilla (Cinquefoil)
Rosa (Rose, many species/shrub types)
Taxus (Yew, E)
Viburnum (*dentatum*, Arrowwood V.)
Weigela (Old-fashioned Weigela)

Trees (E=evergreen)

White fir (*Abies concolor*, E)
 Box Elder (*Acer negundo*)
 Gray Birch (*Betula populifolia*)
 Cedars (*Cedrus*, E)
 Hackberry (*Celtis*)
 Spruces (*Picea*, E)

Pines (*Pinus*, E)
 Oaks (*Quercus*)
 Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)
 Black Locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*)
 White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*, E)
 Elms (*Ulmus*)

Besides the few in this list, you can probably find more at complete garden centers and nurseries. Some of the clues to look for in plants, that help them survive droughts, are:

- fleshy thick stems and leaves, succulent like cactus (such as *Sedums*, *Sempervivums*)
- waxy coated leaves (such as rosemary, wax-leaf begonia)
- densely hairy leaves (such as lamb's ears or *Stacys*)
- silvery, grayish or bluish foliage (such as *Artemesia*, *Dianthus*)
- narrow leaves (such as *Gaura*, ornamental grasses)
- prickly leaves (such as globe thistle or *Eryngium*)

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