

# the iowa gardener

## 20 Must-Have Perennials for Iowa

### Perennials for Sun



**Daffodils** Technically a bulb but such fabulous color in April that they're indispensable. Plant *Narcissus* in large drifts of 10 or more for best effect. Plant early-, mid-, and late-season types for weeks of bloom. Let foliage fade on plant.



**Creeping phlox** Great on slopes and in rock gardens, *Phlox subulata* makes a nice, loose ground-cover. Excellent interplanted with tulips. Blooms in early May in Iowa. Shear after blooming if needed to keep plants compact and full.



**Siberian iris** Unlike Grandma's German bearded iris, *Iris siberica* almost never suffers from pests and diseases. The foliage looks great all season long with beautiful delicate flowers in late May to early June. Plant in drifts.



**Peony** What would a June garden be without *Paeonia*, an old-fashioned favorite? Excellent to get from friends, but also invest in some of the gorgeous new types, especially the crinkled single types. Stunning!



**Purple coneflower** *Echinacea purpurea* is an Iowa prairie native that survives any weather and spreads nicely. Bees and butterflies love it. Leave flowers to dry on the plant to go to seed and attract goldfinches. Interesting in the snow, too.



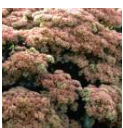
**Daylily** *Hemerocallis* is a July bloomer. Each flower blooms just one day, but the plant produces so many it seems to bloom a long time. Deadhead regularly. Stella de Oro, a miniature, is one of the longest bloomers.



**Joe-pye weed** Give this big guy room to sprawl—about a 4' by 4' area—and he'll steal the show in August and September. *Eupatorium purpureum* hits up to 6 foot and the "chocolate" type is striking with dark maroon stems and deep rose flowers.



**Black-eyed Susan 'Goldsturm'** In late August and September, when everything else is tired-looking, *Rudbeckia fulgida* 'Goldsturm' bursts into bloom and looks delightfully fresh. A good spreader; great to get from friends and family.

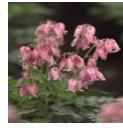


**Tall sedums** While 'Autumn Joy' is the most common, try other less tall sedums, such as 'Brilliant'. It flops less. Divide 'Autumn Joy' every two years to prevent flopping. Plant in drifts of three or more for best impact. Blooms in September.



**Asters** Fancy cousins of the native prairie flower, garden asters are September bloomers. Avoid types not hardy to Zone 4 and colder. Consider spraying with a fungicide (organic types available) in April to prevent mildew problems in summer.

### Perennials for Shade



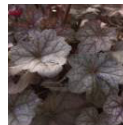
**Everblooming-bleeding heart** Unlike its more common cousin, *Dicentra eximia* has ferny foliage that looks good all season long and little pink flowers that are produced all season long. An amazing plant! First heavy flush of blooms in April.



**Virginia bluebells** *Mertensia virginica* blooms in late April. Spreads rapidly, especially in more moist conditions. Great in rough grass or among trees. Excellent to get as divisions from a friend. Creates a gorgeous blue mist of bloom.



**Columbine** The intricate flowers of *Aquilegia x hybrida* often remind me of elaborate hanging lanterns. The common type can be dug and shared, but do try the stunning special cultivars in blues, pinks, and yellows. Blooms in May.



**Coral bells** *Heuchera* foliage is so nice you could grow it for that alone. Often green, it now also comes in fantastical colors and markings. Almost as a bonus, it produces sprays of flowers in pink and white in June. Doesn't like too much shade.



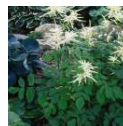
**Lily-of-the-valley** A stand of *Convallaria majalis* makes passerby stop to appreciate its sweet fragrance in May or June. Spreads rapidly to the point of being invasive. Plant it where it's contained by sidewalks, driveways, or other major barriers.



**Astilbe** This moisture-lover will be sparse with small blooms if not given ample extra waterings and good, rich soil. Gorgeous plumes of flowers in July and sometimes August. Size depends on the type of cultivar.



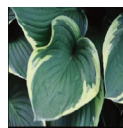
**Lamium** A showy groundcover, it spreads readily with ideal conditions and ample, but not too much, moisture. Look for interesting cultivars. Pink or white flowers in June or July.



**Goats-beard** Often mistaken for astilbe, but this woodland native plant is taller (4 to 6 feet) and less needy about water. Beautiful creamy white plumes. Blooms in June and July.



**Ligularia 'The Rocket'** Hits 3 to 4 feet tall. In all but the wettest years, it needs lots of water in late summer, and direct afternoon sun will make it wilt. The show-stopping spires in June or July make it worth it. Appreciates dark, rich soil.



**Hosta** Try a variety of hostas. Giant yellow-green 'Sum and Substance' spreads up to 4 feet across. Try blue crinkled types and those with creamy, subtle variations in greens, creams, and yellows. *Hosta plantaginea* is outrageously fragrant.