



# FLOWERS

## Herbaceous Perennials

no. 7.405

by M. Meehan, J.E. Klett and R.A. Cox<sup>1</sup>

### Quick Facts...

These herbaceous perennials are best adapted for Colorado's lower elevations.

Herbaceous perennials differ in bloom period, flower color, height, foliage texture and environmental requirements.

Environmental requirements include sun and wind exposure or lack of it, soil conditions and water needs.

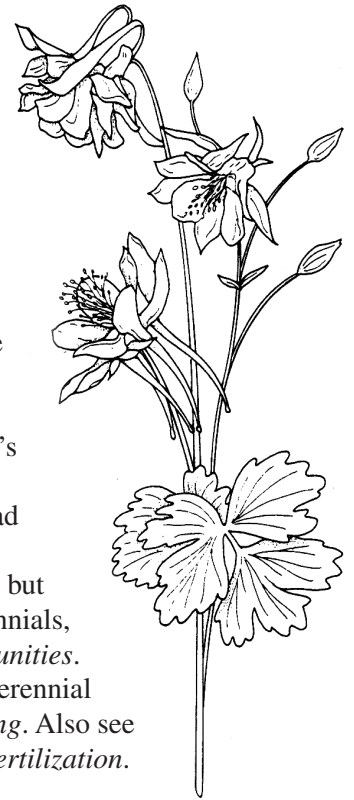
Matching the perennial plant to the site conditions produces a successful perennial garden.

An ever-expanding palette of perennials lets home gardeners create showy collections of herbaceous perennials.

Under normal growing conditions, perennials live many years, dying back to the ground each winter. They quickly establish themselves in a few growing seasons and create a backbone for the flower garden.

Plants vary in flower color, bloom time, height, foliage texture and environmental requirements. Environmental requirements include sun exposure, soil conditions and water needs. The key to a successful perennial garden is to choose plants whose requirements match your site's conditions.

Table 1 lists perennials adapted to the broad range of growing conditions in Colorado's lower elevations. Many also do well at higher elevations, but for a more specific listing of higher elevation perennials, see fact sheet 7.406, *Flowers for Mountain Communities*. More information on design and maintenance of perennial gardens can be found in 7.402, *Perennial Gardening*. Also see 7.840, *Vegetable Garden: Soil Management and Fertilization*.



### Key to Table 1:

- <sup>a</sup> only most common cultivars are listed.
- <sup>b</sup> Not Important. Barely-noticeable flowers that are unimportant. The plant is grown for its foliage only.
- X: Xeric; plants that are adapted to low water conditions.
- M: Plants that prefer moist soils.
- C: Flowers that are good for cutting.
- \* Cultivar - a variety of a species that is developed, propagated and maintained under cultivation. Short for "cultivated variety."
- \*\* Biennial - a plant that grows foliage the first year, blooms and sets seed the second year, then dies.

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**Table 1: Herbaceous perennials best adapted to lower elevations.**

SUNNY EXPOSURE					
Botanical and Common Name	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Cultivars <sup>a</sup>	Comments/Cultural Hints
<i>Achillea</i> hybrids Yarrow	White-Red- Pastels-Yellow	June-Sept.	1.5-2.5'	Moonshine, Paprika, Summer Pastels	Spreads quickly; good for drying. X, C
<i>Achillea filipendula</i> Fernleaf yarrow	Yellow	June-Oct.	2.5-4.5'	Coronation Gold, Gold Plate, Parker's Variety	Fern-like leaf texture; spreads to 3'. X, C
<i>Alcea rosea</i> Hollyhock	Red-Pink-White	June-Aug.	3-6'	Chater's Series, Majorette, Powder Puff	Biennial or perennial; use as background plant; prone to rust disease.
<i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i> C Pearly everlasting	White	Aug.-Oct.	1-2'		Silver grey foliage; good bloom for drying. X,
<i>Anchusa azurea</i> Italian bugloss	Blue	May-June	1-4'	Dropmore, Little John, Loddon Royalist	Specimen plant or for back of garden.
<i>Anthemis tinctoria</i> Golden marguerite	Yellow	July-Aug.	1.5-2'	Kelwayi	Good for dry soil with low fertility; profuse bloomer. X, C
<i>Armeria maritima</i> Sea pink	Red-Pink-White	April-June	6-8"	Alba, Dusseldorf Pride, Splendens, Vindictive	Dense rounded mat foliage, adapts to dry soil; salt tolerant.
<i>Artemisia schmidtiana</i> Silver mound sage	NI <sup>b</sup>	NI <sup>b</sup>	8-12"	Silver Mound	Soft, feathery, silver gray foliage; used for specimen or contrast. X
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> Butterfly weed	Orange	June-Aug.	2'		Best in well drained soil. X, C
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i> New England aster	White-Pink-Purple	Sept.-Oct.	3-4'	Alma Potschke, Hella Lacy, September Ruby	Prefers well drained soil; may require staking. C
<i>Aster novi-belgii</i> Michaelmas daisy	White-Pink-Purple	Aug.-Sept	2-3'	Alert, Prof. Kippenburg, Snow Flurry	Prefers well drained soil; may require staking. C
<i>Aurinia saxatilis</i> Basket-of-gold	Yellow	April-May	9-12"	Compacta, Sulfureum	Gray-green mounding foliage; sheer after bloom.
<i>Baptisia australis</i> False indigo	Blue	May-June	2-4.5'		Background plant; interesting seed pods. X, C
<i>Boltonia asteroides</i> Boltonia	Pink-White	Aug.-Oct.	4-5'	Pink Beauty, Snowbank	Aster-like blooms; use as a background plant. C
<i>Callirhoe involucrata</i> Purple poppy mallow	Reddish Purple	June-Aug.	6"		Trailing stems spread to 3'; blooms are cup-shaped. X
<i>Centranthus ruber</i> Jupiter's beard, red valerian	Pink-White	May-Sept.	2.5'	Albus	Prefers well drained soil; gray-green foliage. X, C
<i>Coreopsis grandiflora</i> Coreopsis	Yellow	June-Sept.	1-2.5'	Baby Sun, Early Sunrise, Sunray	Extend bloom by removing spent flowers. X, C
<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> Threadleaf coreopsis	Yellow	July-Sept.	1.5-2.5'	Moonbeam, Zagreb	Fine-textured foliage. X, C
<i>Delphinium</i> hybrids Delphinium	White-Blue-Pink- Purple	June-Aug.	2-4'	Conn. Yankee, Dwarf & Giant Pacific hybrids	Seeds and plant poisonous; may need staking. C
<i>Dendranthema x morifolium</i> Hardy chrysanthemum	Yellow-Pink-Red- Purple-White	July-Oct.	1-3'	Numerous	Pinch stems in June for more fall blooms; can cause skin irritation. C
<i>Dianthus plumarius</i> Cottage pink	Pink-White	May-July	1-1.5'	Numerous	Dense rounded habit; fragrant blooms.
<i>Echinops ritro</i> Globe thistle	Blue	July-Sept.	3-4'	Taplow Blue	Prefers well drained soil; globe flowers can bloom 6-8 weeks. X, C
<i>Erigeron</i> hybrids Fleabane	Pink-Purple	June-July	1-3'	Azure Fairy, Foerster's Darling, Prosperity	Needs well drained soil; extend bloom by removing spent flowers. C
<i>Euphorbia polychroma</i> Cushion spurge	Chartreuse	April-May	1.5-2'		Neat green mounds; red fall color; sap may be a skin irritant; less invasive.
<i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i> Blanket flower	Yellow-Red- Orange	June-Sept.	.5-2.5'	Baby Cole, Burgundy, Goblin	Showy, daisy-like blooms. X, C
<i>Gypsophila paniculata</i> Baby's breath	White- Pink	June-Sept.	2-3'	Bristol Fairy, Perfecta, Pink Fairy	Airy plant; delicate blooms; good for drying. C
<i>Helenium autumnale</i> Sneezeweed	Yellow-Red	Aug.-Sept.	2-4'	Butterpat, Moerheim	Brightly colored, daisy-like blooms. M, C
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> <i>scabra</i> False sunflower	Yellow	July-Sept.	3-4'	Summer Sun	Use as specimen planting or at back of garden. C
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i> Candytuft	White	April-June	1-1.5'	Alexander's White, Autumn Snow	Glossy green foliage; shear after bloom; may repeat bloom in fall.

**Table 1, continued.**

SUNNY EXPOSURE, continued					
Botanical and Common Name	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Cultivars <sup>a</sup>	Comments/Cultural Hints
<i>Iris</i> hybrids Bearded iris	Blue-White-Red- Purple-Yellow	May-June	1-2.5'	Numerous	Prefers well drained soil; sword-like foliage. X, C
<i>Kniphofia uvaria</i> Torch lily	Red-Orange- Yellow	June-Aug.	2-3'	Primrose Beauty, Springtime	Spikes of flowers arise from clumps of grasslike foliage. X, C
<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> Lavender	Blue	July-Oct.	1-1.5'	Hidcote, Munstead	Aromatic blooms; semievergreen foliage. X, C
<i>Liatris spicata</i> Gayfeather, blazing star	White-Pink- Purple	July-Sept.	2-3'	Floristan Violet, Kobold	Clumps of grassy foliage; dense bottle brush blooms. C
<i>Limonium latifolium</i> Sea lavender	Purple	June-Sept.	1.5-3'		Blooms create an airy texture. X, C
<i>Linum perenne</i> Perennial flax	Blue-White	May-June	2'	Diamant, Sapphire	Light, airy plant; good wildflower; reseeds readily. X
<i>Monarda didyma</i> Bee balm	Red-Pink-Violet- White	July-Aug.	2-3'	Cambridge Scarlet, Croftway Pink	Spreads quickly; susceptible to powdery mildew. C
<i>Nepeta</i> species Catmint	Blue	May-Oct.	1-2'	Blue Wonder	Spreading habit; trim back after bloom; aromatic leaves.
<i>Oenothera speciosa</i> Mexican evening primrose	Rose	June-Sept.	6-12"		Spreading; 2" blooms. X
<i>Oenothera macrocarpa</i> Ozark sundrop	Yellow	June-Sept.	1-1.5'		Spreading habit; 3-4" blooms. X
<i>Penstemon</i> species Penstemon, beard tongue	Blue-Pink-Red- Violet-White- Purple-Yellow	May-July	1-3'	Bandera, Elfin Pink, Prairie Dusk	Prefers well drained soil; stalks of tubular blooms. X
<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i> Russian sage	Lavender	July-Sept.	4'		Silver gray, aromatic foliage; cut back in spring above soil line. X
<i>Phlox paniculata</i> Garden phlox	White-Pink- Red-Blue	July-Sept.	1.5-3'	Blue Boy, Mount Fuji, Starfire	Tall stalks with bloom clusters; susceptible to powdery mildew. C
<i>Phlox subulata</i> Creeping phlox, moss pink	White-Pink- Red-Blue	April-May	4-6"	Crimson Beauty, White Delight,	Carpet-like mat; needle-like foliage. X
<i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i> Black-eyed Susan, coneflower	Yellow	July-Sept.	1.5'	Goldsturm	3" daisy-like blooms with brown-black centers. X, C
<i>Salvia x superba</i> Perennial salvia	Pink-White- Blue-Purple	May-Aug.	1.5-2.5'	Blue Queen, May Night, Rose Queen	Spike-like blooms that repeat if spent blooms removed. X, C
<i>Scabiosa caucasica</i> Pincushion flower	White-Blue-Pink	June-Oct.	1.5-2'	Perfecta Alba, Blue Perfection	Blooms on wiry stems; prefers cool summers. C
<i>Solidago</i> hybrids Goldenrod hybrids	Yellow	July-Sept.	1.5-2'	Golden Baby, Golden Fleece, Cloth of Gold	Prefers well drained soil; mistakenly blamed for hay fever. X, C

**SUN TO PART SHADE**

Botanical and Common Name	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Cultivars <sup>a</sup>	Comments/Cultural Hints
<i>Alchemilla mollis</i> Lady's mantle	Chartreuse	May-June	1-1.5'		Prefers cool summers; fertile soil. M
<i>Anemone pulsatilla</i> ( <i>Pulsatilla vulgaris</i> ) Pasque flower	Purple-Red- White	April-May	1'	Alba, Rubra	Feathery seed heads persist into June; prefers well drained soil.
<i>Aquilegia caerulea</i> Rocky Mountain columbine	Blue-White	May-June	1.5-2.5'		Prefers well drained soil; Colorado state flower. C
<i>Aquilegia</i> hybrids Columbine hybrids	Blue-Red- Yellow-White	May-June	1-3'	McKana Hybrids, Songbirds	Prefers well drained soil; extend bloom by removing spent flowers. C
<i>Arunco dioicus</i> Goatsbeard	White	June-July	3-5'	Kneiffii	Large rounded shrub-like perennial; dense spikes of blooms. M
<i>Astilbe x arendsii</i> Astilbe, false spirea	Red-Pink-White- Lavender	June-July	2-3'	Amethyst, Fanal	Arching plumes of flowers; prefers cool summers, fertile soil. M, C
<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i> Heart-leafed bergenia	Pink	April-May	1-1.5'		Deep glossy green leaves with burgundy fall color.
<i>Campanula carpatica</i> Carpathian harebell	Blue-White	June-July	6-12"	Blue Clips, White Clips	Compact mounded habit; small, bell-shaped blooms.
<i>Dianthus barbatus</i> Sweet William	White-Pink- Purple-Red	May-July	1'	Midget Mix, Newport Pink	Biennial; flat-top cluster of blooms. C

**Table 1, continued.**

**SUN TO PART SHADE, continued**

<b>Botanical and Common Name</b>	<b>Flower Color</b>	<b>Bloom Period</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Cultivars<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Comments/Cultural Hints</b>
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i> Foxglove	Purple-Pink-White-Yellow	June-July	3-4'	Excelsior Hybrids, Foxy	Biennial; reseeds readily; parts of plant are poisonous. M, C
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i> Purple coneflower	Purple-Pink-White	July-Sept	2-3'	Alba, Magnus, White Swan	Stiff habit; good in naturalized areas. X, C
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i> Bloodred cranesbill	Blue-Purple-Red-White	May-July	1-1.5'	Album, Shepherd's Warning	Mounding habit; foliage has red fall color. M
<i>Geum</i> hybrids Geum, Avens	Red-Orange-Yellow	June-July	1.5-2'	Lady Stratheden, Mrs. Bradshaw	Prefers rich organic soil; dark green foliage. C
<i>Hemerocallis</i> species Daylily	Yellow-Pink-Red-Orange	June-Aug.	1.5-3'	Stella d'Oro and many others.	Grass-like foliage; trumpet-shaped blooms.
<i>Heuchera micrantha</i> Alumroot	White	June-July	1-1.5'	Palace Purple	Some cultivars have purple foliage with a rounded habit. M, C
<i>Heuchera sanguinea</i> Coralbells	Red-White-Pink	June-Aug.	1-1.5'	Bressingham Hybrids, June Bride	Small bell-shaped blooms; extend bloom by removing spent flowers. M, C
<i>Hibiscus moscheutos</i> Rose mallow	Red-Pink-White	July-Sept.	2-4.5'	Disco Belle, Southern Belle	Prefers moist soil; 6-10" blooms. M
<i>Hylotelephium spectabile</i> <i>Sedum spectabile</i> Showy stonecrop	Pink-Red-White	Aug.-Sept.	1.5-2'	Brilliant, Carmen	Succulent foliage; 'Autumn Joy', 'Indian Chief' commonly sold hybrids. X, C
<i>Iris sibirica</i> Siberian iris	Purple-Blue-White	June	2-3'	Caesar's Brother, Snow Queen, White Swirl	Clumps of slender leaves. M, C
<i>Leucanthemum x superbum</i> Shasta daisy	White	July-Aug	1-3'	Alaska, Silver Princess	Extend bloom by removing spent flowers. M, C
<i>Lupinus</i> hybrids Lupine	Yellow-Red-Blue-Purple-White	May-June	2.5'	Russell Hybrids	Prefers cool summers; large pea-like blooms. M, C
<i>Lychnis chalcidonica</i> Maltese cross	Scarlet-Pink-White	June-July	2-3'	Alba, Rosea	Small groupings add bold color to the garden M, C
<i>Paeonia</i> hybrids Peony	White-Pink-Red	May-June	2-3'	Many	Showy spring blooms; attractive foliage. M, C
<i>Papaver orientale</i> Oriental poppy	Orange-Red-Pink-White	May-June	2-3'	Allegro, Carousel	Large papery blooms; foliage goes dormant after bloom; spreading. X, C
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i> Obedient plant	Pink-White-Lavender	Sept.-Nov.	2-4'	Summer Snow, Vivid	Dark green foilage; spikes of tubular blooms; spreading. M, C
<i>Platycodon grandiflorus</i> Balloon flower	White-Pink-Blue	July-Sept	1.5-3'	Fuji, Shell Pink	Prefers well-drained soil; balloon-shaped buds. X, C
<i>Pulmonaria saccharata</i> Jerusalem sage	Blue-Pink-White	April-May	1-1.5'	Mrs. Moon, Roy Davidson	Leaves with white spots; clump-forming. M
<i>Thalictrum aquilegifolium</i> Columbine meadow rue	Lavender	May-June	2-3'		Delicate blooms; columbine-like foliage. M, C
<i>Thermopsis rhombifolia</i> Golden banner	Yellow	May-June	2-3'		Spreading; dark green foliage. C
<i>Tradescantia x andersoniana</i> Spiderwort	White-Blue-Purple	May-July	1.5-2'	Innocence, Red Cloud, Zwanenburg Blue	Strap-like leaves; cut back in mid-summer. M
<i>Veronica spicata</i> Spike speedwell	Blue-Pink-White	June-Sept.	1-2'	Blue Charm, Icicle, Red Fox	Upright habit; 'Sunny Border Blue' is a commonly sold hybrid. M, C

**PART SHADE TO SHADE**

<b>Botanical and Common Name</b>	<b>Flower Color</b>	<b>Bloom Period</b>	<b>Height</b>	<b>Cultivars<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Comments/Cultural Hints</b>
<i>Aconitum napellus</i> Monkshood	Blue-Violet	June-Sept.	1.5-3'		Lacy foliage; helmet-shaped flowers; poisonous. M, C
<i>Anemone x hybrida</i> Japanese anemone	Pink-White	Aug.-Oct.	2-3'	Prince Heinrich, Whirlwind	Mounding foliage; flowers produced on tall stems. M
<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> Siberian bugloss	Blue	May-June	1-1.5'		Blooms like forget-me-nots; heart-shaped leaves form rounded mound. M
<i>Dicentra eximia</i> Fringed bleeding heart	Pink-White	April-May	1-1.5'	Luxuriant, Purity	With adequate water will bloom later into the summer. C
<i>Dicentra spectabilis</i> Bleeding heart	Red-White	April-June	2-3'	Alba	Fern-like leaves; heart-shaped blooms. C
<i>Ligularia dentata</i> Ragwort	Dark Orange	July-Sept.	3-4'	Desdemona, Othello	Mounded habit; daisy-like blooms. M
<i>Ligularia stenocephala</i> Ragwort	Yellow	June-Aug.	3-5'	The Rocket	Rocket-like blooms reach 4-6'; foliage forms large clump below blooms. M

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