

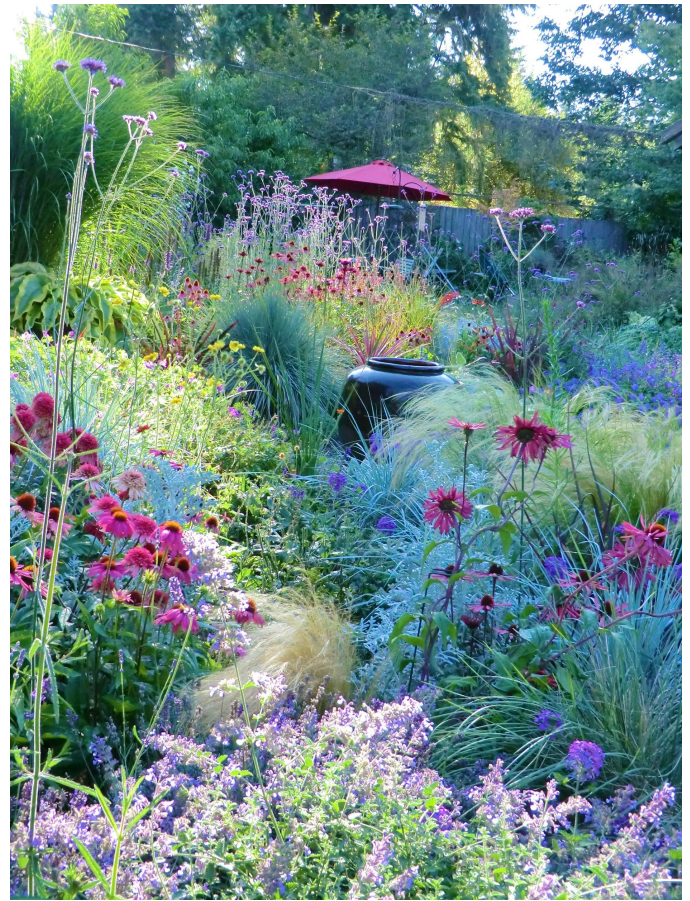
Perennial Gardening

A Garden Guide

Perennial plants are plants that come back year after year. Perennial gardens mix shrubs, ornamental grasses and perennial plants. Such gardens can be as complex or simple as you like.

The plants we carry are hand selected to ensure that they will perform well here. Carefully read tags and signs for growing information.

Inspired by garden designer Piet Oudolf, current trends in garden design include using many native plants, with an emphasis on native grass and flowers with not only beautiful blooms, but interesting seed heads for year round interest. Low maintenance designs are looking to reflect the natural world, as the native plants provide numerous ecological benefits to local wildlife.



All perennial gardens will benefit from careful planning to ensure that something is blooming from early spring to late fall, and that there is winter interest.

SOIL PREPARATION

One of the keys to growing healthy perennials is soil preparation. Most of the soil in Western North Carolina is heavy clay with poor drainage and aeration. It is very important to loosen the clay with a rototiller or to double dig with a shovel. Afterwards, amend the soil by digging in or rototilling one bag of Soil Conditioner (pine bark fines) and either one bag of Cow Manure or Mushroom Compost per 25 square feet of garden space. In addition, gypsum mixed in at a rate of 20 lbs. per 100 sq. ft.

will help break up clay and improve drainage.

FERTILIZATION

When perennials are purchased at RCN, they have been fertilized with Osmocote®, a slow-release chemical fertilizer which usually provides enough nutrients for the first growing season.

The following year, more nutrients can be provided by using organic fertilizers that feed the soil, such as Cow Manure, Mushroom Compost, Fish Emulsion, Bio-tone® fertilizer, or Plant-tone® fertilizer. If animals are a concern, vegan fertilizers such as Alfalfa meal or Down to Earth's Vegan Fertilizer will still allow you to use organic methods.

Annual mulch application will improve the soil, suppress weeds, and conserve water.

SUN REQUIREMENTS



It is very important to place the right plant in the right location. Before planting, take note of how many hours a day the different areas receive sunlight. Full sun is 6 or more hours of sun each day, part sun is 4-5 hours, and shade is 3 or less hours of sun unless it is strong afternoon sun. Many part sun plants will live with three hours of hot afternoon sun. If a plant seems to be struggling in one location, try moving it to a sunnier or shadier spot. Perennials are easily moved in spring or fall.

MAINTENANCE

Dividing: if they bloom in the Spring or early summer, divide in fall, if they bloom late summer or early fall, divide in spring. Some taller plants may benefit from a strategic trim or staking. When to prune, what to prune, and how much to prune depends on the individual plant. Pruning keeps plants neat and tidy, can promote reblooming (in certain plants), and can help improve air flow - thereby reducing disease.

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