

One of my favorite groups of perennials is the mint family. Many species offer wonderful fragrances, beautiful flowers, and attract beneficial insects, including pollinators. Even better, most are quite waterwise, making them excellent choices for Utah landscapes.

Among the many mint family plants that thrive in Utah, several stand out for their long bloom periods, beauty, and drought tolerance. One of my favorites is hummingbird mint, also known as Agastache or anise hyssop. These plants are native to the United States and Mexico. While some species grow in moist areas, many are extremely drought-tolerant once established. Flower colors range from white and pink to shades of orange, purple, red, and yellow. Most varieties grow about two feet tall and wide and bloom from late June well into October.

Another favorite is catmint, sometimes called Nepeta or catnip. Older varieties can become quite large, but newer selections stay compact, often under 18 inches tall. Walker's Low is a popular choice, while Cat's Pajamas, Cat's Meow, Persian Blue, and Little Trudy offer even more compact growth. Many catmints bloom from late spring through October, providing months of color and attracting pollinators throughout the season.

Lavender is another excellent waterwise perennial. It is evergreen and blooms in late spring to early summer with light purple flowers. It typically lives for 5–10 years and thrives in hot locations, such as the south or west side of a building in full sun. Do not prune lavender to the ground in the fall; doing so will likely kill it. Instead, trim it back by up to half after it finishes blooming. Avoid planting French lavender, as it is not as cold-hardy as most varieties of English lavender. Depending on the variety, lavender grows to around 24 inches high and wide.

Hardy rosemary is a plant that was not traditionally considered cold-hardy along the Wasatch Front. However, with the warmer winters of recent years, many plants grown outdoors have thrived in protected locations, such as against south- and west-facing walls. Look for the varieties Arp or Madeline Hill. Both are among the hardiest rosemary selections and can survive temperatures near 0°F in protected locations.

Perennial salvia is another popular mint family plant, producing pink-to-purple flowers in late spring and early summer. It grows to about 18 inches tall and will often rebloom if deadheaded immediately after flowering. It also lives for 5–10 years and is quite drought-tolerant. However, it performs best when watered about once every seven days during the growing season.

For gardeners looking for lower-growing options, thyme groundcovers are a closely related group of plants that make excellent waterwise groundcovers. They can often survive with irrigation every few weeks and come in a variety of heights, textures, and colors. Look for

creeping thyme, woolly thyme, elfin thyme, mother of thyme, and lemon thyme, which has a pleasant lemon scent. Be careful not to overwater these plants, as excessive moisture can cause problems.

Other excellent mint family perennials include bee balm, lemon balm, herb sage, oregano, and, in containers, peppermint and spearmint.

Whether you're looking for long-lasting color, pollinator attraction, fragrance, or waterwise performance, members of the mint family offer something for nearly every Utah landscape.