

Ask a Specialist: Six Lovely, Long-blooming Perennials to Consider

Taun Beddes

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It is finally time to plant flowers, and it is easy to default to annuals (plants that die at the end of the season) such as petunias and marigolds. These and other annuals are beautiful, but there are also many spectacular perennials that have long-bloom seasons and do not have to be replanted every year. Keep in mind that perennials are not necessarily lower maintenance than annuals, but they open up a wider array of textures and flower styles that add interest to a yard. The following are among the easiest to grow and longest blooming and are just a few of the many lovely options.

Hummingbird Mint (Anise Hyssop): There are several species and cultivars available. Most prefer hot sun and are moderately to extremely drought hardy. Flower color varies from white to almost red. They generally reach 18-30 inches high and wide and bloom from July to October. Both the foliage and flowers are fragrant and attract many beneficial insects to the yard. Be sure to check the cold hardiness of individual cultivars. Some will only survive on the Wasatch Front, while others are fine in colder mountain valleys.

Blanket Flower (Gaillardia): Most blanket flower species are North American natives. They have beautiful daisy-like flowers from late May to first frost. Each plant grows 9-12 inches tall and around 2 feet wide. Gaillardia do not tolerate overwatering and are perfectly happy being deep soaked every 7-14 days, depending on the soil and temperature. They do need to be deadheaded weekly.

Gaura (Whirling Butterfly): Whirling Butterfly blooms from June to frost. It loves heat and is relatively drought hardy. The plants are best used in groupings and attract many beneficial insects. Because of the profuse number of flowers, periodic deadheading is a must to encourage new flowers. To do so, use hedging shears to cut spent flowers back to the tops of the plants. New flowers are produced within a week or so after. These are best grown along the Wasatch Front and warmer areas.

Yellow Corydalis: This is one of the few plants that blooms from June to frost and thrives in shaded locations. It lives for 3-5 years, but reseeds itself readily. Plants reach 18-24 inches high and wide and tolerate most soils. Although they do not like to be excessively wet, do not drought stress them.

Japanese Anemone (Windflower): Japanese Anemone also tolerates shade. It offers height in landscapes, ornamental foliage and late summer-to-fall flowers. It is generally available for purchase by mid-summer. There are anemone species that bloom at different times during the growing season. Flowers, depending on the cultivar, are similar in appearance to daisies or poppies. Windflower is somewhat slow to establish. However, once it does, it fills in well.

Stella D' Oro Daylily: This is one of the most popular perennials, especially among the hundreds of daylilies available. It blooms for 2-3 months in the middle of the growing season with yellow-orange flowers. Besides occasional deadheading and cutting back in the fall, there is little required maintenance to make this plant thrive. Divide it every 3-5 years to maintain production of profuse flowers. Stella D' Oro Daylily performs well in part shade to full sun.

By: Taun Beddes, Utah State University Extension horticulturist, taun.beddes@usu.edu, 801-851-8460