

### **INTRODUCTION**

At the turn of the century, gardens were show places for perennials. They fell into disfavour, but are now being revived as increasing leisure time is allowing more time for gardening with these beautiful plants.

### **Space Requirements**

Perennials are attractive in any area, large or small. Traditional perennial borders were long and 1.2 metres wide or wider. Perennials can be grown in less space, alone or in combination with shrubs or other plants.

### **Growing Conditions**

Perennials can be found to suit almost every growing condition in a landscape. Some perennials prefer full sun, others are tolerant of sun or light shade, and yet others prefer light shade. Most perennials prefer a fertile, well drained soil. Some, however, prefer dry conditions and others require moist soils to grow.

### **Planning**

Planning your perennial garden on paper is very helpful. It is easier to erase and redraw a plan than to dig up and move plants. It is also healthier for the plants if they are not moved too often after they have been planted.

Start with a walk through the yard. Make notes of views, slopes, permanent structures, wind direction, exposure to the sun, and other plants. Mark these on your rough sketch, remember to include distances and sizes. Drawing a plan to scale (1 cm on paper equals 50 cm on the ground) can prevent a yard from being overplanted or plants outgrowing their space.

Choose plants suited to the growing conditions you have identified in your yard. Plan groups of plants, rather than individual plants. Think about color, form, size, texture, blooming times and hardiness. Hardiness of perennials depends on the plant's ability to withstand cold, but it also includes its tolerance to drought, soil conditions, wind, light conditions, snow cover and moisture levels. The following books may help you choose your perennials

***Perennials for the Prairies*** by Edgar Toop & Sara Williams  
***The Harrowsmith Perennial Garden*** by Patrick Lima  
***Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia*** by Donald Wyman

Mark all your plant selections on the plan; this will be your planting plan.

### **Preparing the Planting Area**

Careful preparation of the soil in the planting area is very important for growing perennials successfully. It is best to prepare the planting area in the fall, but it can be prepared in early spring.

Dig the area out to a depth of 45 - 60 cm. Set aside and discard poor subsoil, clay and rock. Add compost or composted manures and bonemeal to the remaining soil and replace in the bed. A screened loam with compost and sand can be added to fill the area. Allow the area to settle for a few weeks before you plant.

### **Planting**

Perennials can be planted in spring or late summer. Oriental poppies, Hosta and Baby's breath are planted in spring to allow them to become well established before winter. Peonies, lilies and spring-flowering perennials and bulbs are planted in September. These plants require the cool fall weather to establish their roots before flowering in spring or summer.

Mark off the areas for each plant or groups of plants with sand or bonemeal. Follow your planting plan. Set the plants in their pots in the beds. Step back and look at the arrangement. Make any changes, then plant. Place the plants in the soil to the same level as they were in their containers. Water.

### **MAINTENANCE**

**Watering:** thorough soaking encourages deep roots and help plants survive warm, dry weather. Water when the top 2 cm of soil is dry. Apply water in the morning to provide moisture for the plants during the day when they need it most and to reduce the risk of disease.

**Soil management:** fertilizing is not necessary if you maintain the soil quality. Add compost or composted manures and bonemeal each fall. Sometimes coarse sand may also be needed.

**Weed Control:** pull or hoe weeds when they are small. Use mulch to cover the ground between plants. Do not use chemicals, they can damage or kill your perennials.

**Insect Control:** healthy plants are less likely to be damaged by insects. Regular checks of plants and soapy water are the best method for insect control.

**Support:** some perennials will require support because of their height (delphiniums) or size (peonies). Support them with stakes, twiggy sticks or cages as they are growing. Bonemeal will also help plants to grow strong sturdy stems.

**Deadheading:** removing faded flowers is called deadheading. It keeps plants looking tidy and may encourage more flowers and stronger plants.

## **FALL CLEAN UP AND PREPARATION FOR WINTER**

Perennials are sometimes called herbaceous perennials; this describes their habit of growth. Herbaceous perennials are plants which die back to soil level each fall and regrow from the root or crown each spring. Trees and shrubs which are also perennial, but they are woody perennials.

**Fall Clean up:** Remove all diseased plant parts and cut back the remaining plants to a height of 15 to 20 cm. Wait until the plants have turned brown before you do. The stubble will trap the snow and insulate the plants from the variations in our winter weather. Water after all the foliage has died down but before the ground has frozen.

**Winter Care:** After the ground has frozen mulch tender perennials and perennials in sunny locations where snow cover is easily lost with straw or evergreen branches. Leave the mulch in place until the danger of frost is almost past. Loosen it if the spring is very warm but do not remove it completely.

## **CONCLUSION**

Perennials are an important part of every landscape. They can be grown in borders or beds, mixed with other plants, in rock gardens, wild or native gardens, or as accent plants. Perennials can be long lived and easy to care for, especially if their planting locations have been carefully planned and prepared. Lists of **Perennials for Special Conditions** are included in the written information available as part of the FaxBack Feature.

This tape has been prepared as part of the Calgary Parks & Recreation Horticulture Information. A written transcript is available.

**flwr611.growing perennials**

## PERENNIALS FOR SPECIAL CONDITIONS

### INTRODUCTION

This is just a short list of herbaceous perennials plants for different growing conditions to get you started. For detailed information about a particular plant check the many books and magazines written about perennials. Visit the Calgary Zoo's Botanical Garden or a local garden centre to see what is possible to grow in Calgary. Experiment - try different plants to see what grows well in your garden. Information about growing perennials is available in **Tape # 6.1.1 - Perennials**

The names of the plants include the common name and the botanical name because it is important to correctly identify the plants. Common names are nicknames and can vary. Don't let their length or complexity discourage you from using them.

### Plants for Shade

All plants need sunlight; no plant will grow without some sun. Plants that are listed as growing in shade or semishade need light but will not like direct sun.

| Botanic Name                           | Common Name                      | Botanic Name                        | Common Name                    |
|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <i>Aconitum</i>                        | Monk's-hood                      | <i>Gentiana septemfida</i>          | September Gentian              |
| <i>Aegopodium podagraria variegata</i> | Goutweed<br>Snow-on-the-Mountain | <i>Glechoma hederacea variegata</i> | Variegated<br>Creeping Charlie |
| <i>Alchemilla mollis</i>               | Lady's Mantle                    | <i>Hemerocallis</i>                 | Daylily                        |
| <i>Ajuga Reptans</i>                   | Bugleweed                        | <i>Heuchera</i>                     | Coralbells                     |
| <i>Anemone sylvestris</i>              | Windflower                       | <i>Hosta</i>                        | Hosta                          |
| <i>Aruncus sylvestris</i>              | Goat's Beard                     | <i>Iris sibirica</i>                | Siberian Iris                  |
| <i>Astilbe</i>                         | Astilbe / False spirea           | <i>Ligularia dentata</i>            | Golden Groundsel               |
| <i>Bergenia cordifolia</i>             | Bergenia                         | <i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>        | Creeping Jenny                 |
| <i>Convallaria majalis</i>             | Lily-of-the-Valley               | <i>Primula</i>                      | Primroses                      |
| <i>Dicentra spectabilis</i>            | Bleeding Heart                   | <i>Pulmonaria saccharata</i>        | Lungwort                       |
| <i>Doronicum cordatum</i>              | Leopard's Bane                   | <i>Thalictrum</i>                   | Meadow Rue                     |
| <i>Dracocephalum</i>                   | Dragonshead                      | <i>Trollius</i>                     | Globeflower                    |
| <i>Ferns</i>                           | Ferns                            | <i>Vinca minor</i>                  | Periwinkle                     |
| <i>Filipendula</i>                     | Meadowsweet                      | <i>Viola cornuta</i>                | Horned Violet                  |

## Plants for Full Sun

| Botanical Name                    | Common Name          | Botanical Name                  | Common Name            |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Achillea millefolium</i>       | Common Yarrow        | <i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i> | Blanketflower          |
| <i>Achillea ptarmica</i>          | Sneezewort           | <i>Gypsophila paniculata</i>    | Baby's Breath          |
| <i>Alcea</i>                      | Hollyhock            | <i>Gypsophila repens</i>        | Creeping Baby's Breath |
| <i>Aurinia saxatile</i>           | Golden Alyssum       | <i>Iris x germanica</i>         | Bearded Iris           |
| <i>Anthemis tinctoria</i>         | Golden Marguerite    | <i>Iris pumila</i>              | Dwarf Iris             |
| <i>Armeria maritima</i>           | Sea Pink or Thrift   | <i>Leontopodium</i>             | Edelweiss              |
| <i>Artemesia schmidtiana</i>      | Silver Mound         | <i>Liatris</i>                  | Blazing star           |
| <i>Aster hybrids</i>              | Asters / Daisies     | <i>Limonium latifolium</i>      | Sea Lavender / Statice |
| <i>Centaurea montana</i>          | Mountain bluet       | <i>Linum perenne</i>            | Blue Flax              |
| <i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>       | Snow-in-Summer       | <i>Penstemon</i>                | Beard-tongue           |
| <i>Chrysanthemum maximum</i>      | Shasta Daisy         | <i>Phlox subulata</i>           | Creeping phlox         |
| <i>Coreopsis verticillata</i>     | Threadleaf Coreopsis | <i>Saponaria ocymoides</i>      | Rock Soapwort          |
| <i>Delphinium hybrids</i>         | Delphiniums          | <i>Saponaria officinalis</i>    | Bouncing Bet           |
| <i>Dianthus deltoides</i>         | Maiden Pink          | <i>Scabiosa caucasica</i>       | Blue Bonnets           |
| <i>Dianthus gratianopolitanus</i> | Cheddar Pink         | <i>Sedum kamtschaticum</i>      | Stonecrop              |
| <i>Echinops ritro</i>             | Globe Thistle        | <i>Sedum Spectabile</i>         | Showy Stonecrop        |
| <i>Erigeron umbellatum</i>        | Umbrella Plant       | <i>Sempervivum</i>              | Hen-and-Chicks         |
| <i>Eryngium planum</i>            | Sea Holly            | <i>Thymus serpyllum</i>         | Mother-of-Thyme        |
| <i>Euphorbia epithymoides</i>     | Golden spurge        | <i>Thymus pseudolanuginosus</i> | Woolly Thyme           |

## Fragrant Flowers

| Botanic Name                | Common Name         | Botanic Name                    | Common Name            |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Asperula odorata</i>     | Sweet Woodruff      | <i>Hosta plantaginea</i>        | Fragrant Hosta         |
| <i>Convallaria majalis</i>  | Lily-of-the-Valley  | <i>Iris X germanica</i>         | Bearded Iris (not all) |
| <i>Dianthus barbatus</i>    | Sweet William       | <i>Lavandula officinalis</i>    | Sweet Lavender         |
| <i>Dainthus plumaris</i>    | Garden Pink         | <i>Paeonia lactiflora</i>       | Peony (only some)      |
| <i>Dianthus carophyllus</i> | Carnation (not all) | <i>Primula</i>                  | Primrose (not all)     |
| <i>Dictamnus albus</i>      | Gas Plant           | <i>Thymus serpyllum</i>         | Mother-of-Thyme        |
| <i>Hesperis matronalis</i>  | Sweet Rocket        | <i>Thymus pseudolanuginosus</i> | Woolly Thyme           |

## Groundcovers

Groundcovers are low-growing plants which will cover a fairly large area and form a solid mass of vegetation. They can be used instead of turf grasses for a lawn.

| Botanic Name                           | Common Name           | Botanic Name                    | Common Name             |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Aegopodium podagraria variegata</i> | Variiegated Goutweed  | <i>Gypsophlia repens</i>        | Creeping Baby's Breath  |
| <i>Ajuga Reptans</i>                   | Bugleweed             | <i>Dianthus plumaris</i>        | Garden Pink             |
| <i>Aurinia saxatile</i>                | Golden Alyssum        | <i>Lysimachia nummularia</i>    | Creeping Jenny          |
| <i>Asperula odorata</i>                | Sweet Woodruff        | <i>Pachysandra terminalis</i>   | Japanese Spurge         |
| <i>Arabis albida</i>                   | Wall Rock Cress       | <i>Phlox subulata</i>           | Moss Phlox              |
| <i>Campanula carpatica</i>             | Carpathian Bellflower | <i>Hosta</i>                    | Hosta (small varieties) |
| <i>Campanula poscharskyana</i>         | Serbian Bellflower    | <i>Thymus pseudolanuginosus</i> | Woolly Thyme            |
| <i>Cerastium tomentosum</i>            | Snow-in-Summer        | <i>Thymus serpyllum</i>         | Mother-of-Thyme         |
| <i>Convallaria majalis</i>             | Lily-of-the-Valley    | <i>Sedum (Low growing)</i>      | Stonecrop               |
| <i>Dainthus deltooides</i>             | Maiden Pink           | <i>Vinca minor</i>              | Periwinkle              |