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Xeriscaping: Perennial and Annual Flowers

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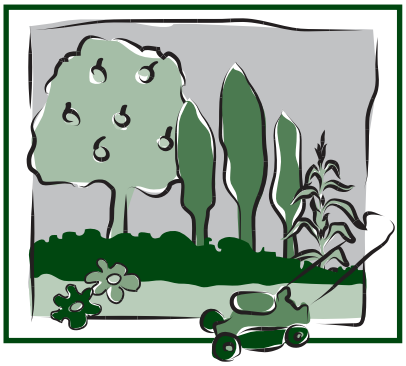

by J.E. Klett and C. Wilson*

Wet climate landscapes have molded perceptions of flower gardens and ingrained the names of the flowers they contain through literature, painting, photography and more. Dry climate gardens by contrast often evoked images of sparseness and scarcity. No more.

A new view of water wise gardens has evolved from the creativity and experimentation of gardeners. It is supported by the wider availability of native and adapted plants from high altitude dry climates around the world. Plant marketing efforts from nurseries and the Plant Select® program have fostered this plant revolution. Plant Select® identifies and distributes plants best for intermountain and high plains gardens. (See www.plantselect.org)

Growing on less water does not mean water-wise gardens are lacking. They can be colorful, with a wide variety of plants, and delight as much as the traditional English garden border. They can also be subtle and evocative of the wide-open skies and intense light of the natural western landscape.

Grasses, perennials and wildflowers native to the Rocky Mountain West are frequently found in the modern Colorado flower garden. Annuals easy on water use are seasonally mixed in. Introduced plants from the high and dry areas of the Andes, Himalayas, the Middle East and South Africa are often included. This list of perennials and annuals includes native and adapted plants for the water wise flower garden. Use it as a tool to explore the expanded garden possibilities in the West.

For additional plant suggestions, see other native plant and xeriscape fact sheets (www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/pubs.html) available from Colorado State University Extension.

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Figure 1: Perennials *Gaillardia x grandiflora* 'Goblin' (lower right) and *Sedum sp*. (center left).

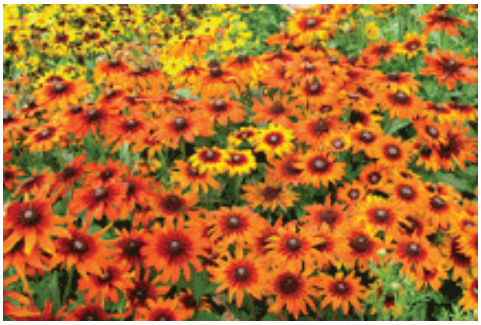

Figure 2: Annuals *Rudbeckia* 'Autumn Colors.'

Figure 3: Denver City County Building Perennial Garden (*Zauschneria garrettii* (bottom left).

Quick Facts

- Nurseries carry a greater selection of native and adapted water wise perennials and annuals than ever before.
- Wider plant availability supports new directions in western flower gardens.
- Use this list of perennial and annual plants as a tool for exploring expanded garden possibilities.

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Perennials

Botanical Name Common Name	Cultivars	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Comments/ Cultural hints
Achillea hybrids Yarrow	'Moonshine'	Light Yellow	Jun-Sep	18-36"	Feathery foliage, vigorous, clump forming
Achillea filipendula Fernleaf yarrow	'Coronation Gold' 'Parker's Variety'	Bright yellow Golden yellow	Jun-Sep Jun-Sep	36-42" 36-48"	Gray-green foliage, heat tolerant Weak stems - may require staking
Achillea millefolium Common yarrow	'Paprika' 'Red Beauty' 'Summer Pastels' 'Terra Cotta'	Red with yellow centers Crimson red Pastel mix Peach pink	Jun-Sep Jun-Sep Jun-Sep Jun-Sep	18-24" 18-24" 18-24" 30-36"	Soft, feathery green foliage, vigorous spreading nature Gray-green feathery foliage, aggressive spreading clump Feathery foliage, forms clumps Silvery feathery foliage, spreading nature
Achillea ptarmica The Pearl yarrow	'The Pearl'	White	Jun-Sep	12-18"	Small sprays of double, buttonlike flowers, open habit, good cut flower
Agastache aurantiaca Hyssop	Coronado® Coronado® Red	Orange Red	Jul-Oct Jul-Oct	15-18 in. 15-18 in.	Silvery green leaves, minty fragrance, Plant Select® plants
Agastache cana Hummingbird's mint	 Sonoran Sunset®	Pink Lavender rose	Jul-Oct Jul-Oct	24-36" 12-18"	Gray green aromatic foliage, upright clumps More compact than species, longer blooming, PlantSelect® plant
Agastache rupestris Sunset hyssop		Salmon pink	Jul-Oct	24-36"	Gray green aromatic foliage, PlantSelect® plant
Agastache hybrid Anise hyssop	'Blue Fortune'	Blue violet	Jul-Oct	24-48"	Dark green leaves on stout stems
Alcea rosea Hollyhock	Chater's series Watchman'	Mix	Jul-Sep Jul-Sep	60-72" 60-72"	Cutting back stalks encourages continuing bloom
Antennaria parvifolia Pussytoes		Pink	May-Jun	2-6"	Wooly silvery-gray leaves
Aquilegia chrysantha Yellow columbine	Denver Gold®	Yellow	May-Aug	24-36"	Recurrent bloom if cut back. Southwestern native PlantSelect® plant
Aquilegia Remembrance® columbine	'Swan Violet & White'	Violet-blue and white	May-Jun	18-24"	Hybrid developed from native *A. caerulea* to honor the memory of those shot at Columbine High School. PlantSelect® plant
Arabis caucasia Rockcress	'Snowcap'	White	Mar-Apr	6-8 in.	Cut back after bloom to maintain compact plant.
Aurinia saxitalis Basket-of-gold		Yellow	Apr	6-12"	Narrow gray-green leaves contrast with bright flowers in bloom.
Baptisia australis False indigo		Blue	May-Jun	36-48"	Attractive brown seed pods. Blue green foliage.
Berlandiera lyrata Chocolate flower		Yellow	Jun-Sep	12-24"	Southeastern Colorado native. Chocolate fragrance from daisy-like flowers. Plant Select® plant
Callirhoe involucrata Prairie winecups		Magenta pink	Jun-Sep	6-12"	Trailing stems sprawl 2 to 3 feet. Plant Select® plant
Calylophus serrulatus Sundrops	'Prairie Lode'	Yellow	Jun-Sep	6"	Spreading ground cover. PlantSelect® plant.
Centaurea montana Mountain bluet / Perennial bachelor button		Violet-blue	Jun-Jul	18-24"	Spidery cornflowers. Vigorous grower that self-seeds.
Centranthus ruber Red valerian or Jupiter's Beard	 'Albus'	Reddish pink White	Jun-Aug	24"	Sprawling plant with blue-green leaves. Reseeds. Deadhead to promote continual blooming.

(Perennials, Continued)

Botanical Name Common Name	Cultivars	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Comments/ Cultural hints
Cerastium tomentosum Snow in summer		White	May-Jun	6-12”	Silvery gray foliage. Needs well drained soil.
Coreopsis auriculata Dwarf coreopsis	‘Nana’	Yellow-orange	May-Sep	6-8”	Low clump former with evergreen foliage. Dead head flowers.
Coreopsis grandiflora Dwarf double coreopsis	‘Sunray’	Golden yellow	Jun-Aug	24”	Double flowers. Spoon-like vibrant green leaves. Compact plant.
Coreopsis lanceolata Lanceleaf coreopsis		Yellow	Jun-Jul	18-24”	Long-lived, fine textured plant with shiny green leaves.
Coreopsis verticillata Fernleaf coreopsis	‘Moonbeam’ ‘Zagreb’	Pale yellow Golden yellow	Jun-Sep	18-24” 12-18”	Finely dissected, bright green foliage. Deep green thread-like leaves.
Delosperma cooperi Purple iceplant		Violet purple	May-Jun	2-4’	Succulent gray-green leaves turn red-purple in winter.
Delosperma nubigenum Yellow iceplant		Yellow	May-Jul	1-2”	Mound of succulent leaves turn purplish in winter.
Delosperma hybrids	Lavender Ice™ Mesa Verde® Table Mountain®	Lavender Salmon pink Fuchsia	May-Aug	2-4 in.	Succulent gray-green leaves Plant Select® plants
Echinacea purpurea Purple coneflower	‘White Swan’ ‘Magnus’	White Dark pink	Jul-Sep	24-36”	Erect prairie wildflower, daisy-like flowers, deep green leaves
Echium amoenum Red Feathers		Russet red	May-Jul	12-16”	Base rosette of foliage with spikes of feathery flowers Plant Select® plant
Erigeron hybrids Fleabane daisy	‘Azure Fairy’	Pink-purple Blue with yellow eye	Jun-Jul	18-24”	Grow in well-drained soil, deadhead for rebloom
Eriogonum umbellatum Sulfur flower	Kannah Creek®	Yellow	May-Jul	6-12”	Dark green mat of foliage with umbrella-like flowers Kannah Creek® foliage turns a rich red in winter - PlantSelect®
Eryngium planum Sea holly		Blue	Jun-Aug	12-24”	Silver-blue flower heads dry well
Eschscholzia californica California poppy		Yellow-orange	Jun-Sep	12-24”	Fine blue green leaves. Short-lived perennial at low elevations, annual at high elevations. Reseeds easily.
Gaillardia aristata Native blanket flower		Yellow	Jun-Aug	18-24”	Fuzzy, green clump of foliage, flowers have reddish brown to orange centers
Gaillardia x grandiflora Blanket flower	‘Burgundy’ ‘Goblin’	Red Red with yellow	Jun-Aug	18-24” 18-24”	Wine red flowers Compact growth
Gaura lindheimeri Whirling butterflies	‘Crimson Butterflies’ ‘Siskiyou Pink’	Pink Pink	Jul-Sep	15-18”	Dark crimson leaves Deep pink flowers with white stamens
Gazania linearis Colorado Gold® Hardy gazania		Yellow orange	May-Oct	4-6”	Deep green linear leaves, blooms open in sunny weather, PlantSelect® plant
Gypsophila paniculata Baby’s breath	‘Bristol Fairy’ ‘Pink Fairy’	White Light pink	Jun-Aug	36-48” 18-24”	Double white airy flowers Light pink double flowers Both useful as cut flowers
Helianthemum nummularium Sunrose	Many	White, pink, yellow, red, orange	May-Jul	8-12”	Numerous cultivars with various flower colors and silvery to deep green foliage

(Perennials, Continued)

Botanical Name Common Name	Cultivars	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Comments/ Cultural hints
Hemerocallis spp. Daylily	Many	Red, orange, yellow, purple, white	Jun-Jul	12-48”	Clumps of long, medium green, grass-like leaves, leafless flower stalks bear bell-shaped flowers
Iberis sempervirens Candytuft		White	Apr-Jun	12-18”	Glossy green foliage, shear after bloom, may repeat bloom in fall
Iris hybrids	Many	Blue, white, red, purple, yellow, orange, bi-colors	May-Jun	8-30”	Sword like leaves add vertical accent to the garden, makes good cut flower
Knautia macedonica Knautia		Burgundy	Jun-Aug	18-36”	Foliage clumps give rise to many openly branched flower stems, reseeds
Kniphofia uvaria Torch lily *Kniphofia caulescens* Regal Torch Lily		Red, orange, yellow, bi-colors Golden, crimson and ivory tri-color	Jul-Sep	24-48” 40”	Vertical flower spikes arise from clumps of grasslike foliage, blooms from bottom of spike upward. PlantSelect® Plant
Lavandula angustifolia English lavender	‘Hidcote’ ‘Munstead’	Lavender blue Lavender blue	May-Sep	12” 12-18”’	Aromatic blooms and foliage, semiev-ergreen, woody stems
Liatrus spicata Gayfeather	‘Kobold’ ‘Floristan Violet’ ‘Floristan White’	Rose Violet purple White	Jul-Sep	18-36”	Clumps of grassy foliage, bottle brush blooms, good cut flower
Limonium latifolium Sea lavender		Lavender purple	Jul-Sep	18-24”	Spoon-shaped, leathery clump of leaves, cloud of airy flowers
Linum perenne Blue flax		Blue	May-Jun	12-24”	Sky blue flowers on airy stems, self-seeds
Lychnis coronaria Rose campion		Purple-red	May-Jul	18-36”	Silvery gray rosette of foliage, reseeds
Mirabilis multiflora Desert four o’clock		Purplish red	Jun-Sep	12-30”	Blue green leaves, trumpet shaped flowers, southern Colorado native
Nepeta spp. Catmint	‘Six Hills Giant’ ‘Walkers Low’ Little Trudy®	Lavender	May-Oct	24-36” 18-24” 8-12”	Fragrant gray-green leaves on square stems, spreading habit, trim back after bloom. Plant Select® plant
Oenothera macrocarpa subsp. *Incana* Evening primrose	Silver Blade®	Yellow	May-Sep	4”	Silver leaves compliment clear yellow flowers. Grow in well-drained soils. Plant Select® plant
Papaver orientale Oriental poppy		Orange, salmon, red	May-Jun	24-30”	Very drought hardy, foliage dies in summer.
Penstemon grandiflorus	Prairie Jewel® penstemon	White, lavender, rose-pink, purple-violet	May	18-36”	Strain of Great Plains penstemons with giant flowers. Attractive silvery leaf rosettes. Plant Select® plant
Penstemon linarioides var. *coloradoensis*	Silverton® bluemat penstemon	Lavender-blue	May-Jun	8-12”	Spreading silvery mounds of ever-green leaves. Plant Select® plant
Penstemon rostriflorus Bridges’ penstemon		Scarlet red	Jul-Sep	24-36”	Southwestern native penstemon no-table for late summer bloom period. Plant Select® plant
Phlox subulata Creeping phlox		White, red, blue, pink	Mar-Apr	4-6”	Plants form blankets of green leaves covered with small, star-shaped flowers
P*ulsatilla vulgaris* Pasqueflower		Purple	Mar-Apr	6-12”	Silvery buds open to cup-shaped blooms, fuzzy seedheads persist into summer
Rudbeckia fulgida Black-eyed Susan	‘Goldsturm’	Golden yellow	Jul-Aug	18-24”	Golden yellow flowers with dark brown to black centers

(Perennials, Continued)

Botanical Name Common Name	Cultivars	Flower Color	Bloom Period	Height	Comments/ Cultural hints
Salvia argentea Silver sage		White	Jun-Jul	24-36”	Silky hairs on large leaves makes this a superior foliage plant. PlantSelect® plant
Salvia nemerosa Sage	‘May Night’ ‘Rose Queen’	Violet blue Rose pink	Jun-Aug	18-24”	Erect flower stalks with gray-green foliage, repeat bloom if cut back after first bloom finishes
Satureja montana var. *illyrica* Purple winter savory		Purple-blue	Aug-Sep	4-6”	Evergreen mounds with late-season showy flowers. Plant Select® plant
Sedum acre Goldmoss stonecrop		Yellow	May-Jun	2-4”	Star-like flowers on short stems with bright green leaves
Sedum Autumn Joy stonecrop	‘Autumn Joy’	Salmon pink	Aug-Sep	18-24”	Upright clump bears thick, rounded, blue-green leaves with flat flower clusters
Sedum spurium Dragon’s Blood stonecrop	‘Dragon’s Blood’	Rose red	Jun-Jul	2-4”	Mats of red-rimmed foliage turn blood-red in fall and winter
Veronica liwanensis Turkish veronica		Cobalt-blue	Apr-Jun	1-2”	Flat, evergreen mats of glossy leaves. Plant Select® plant
Veronica ‘Reavis’	Crystal River® veronica	Blue	Apr-Jun	2-3”	Fast-growing vigorous masses of foliage. Plant Select® plant
Viola corsica Corsican violet		Purple	Apr-Sep	6-8”	A drought tolerant violet. Plant Select® plant
Zauschneria garrettii *(Epilobium garettii* synonymous)	Orange carpet® hummingbird trumpet	Orange-scarlet	Jul-Aug	4-6”	Spreading perennial from Idaho with masses of bloom. Plant Select® plant
Zinnia grandiflora Paperflower		Yellow	Jun-Sep	6”	Long lasting bloom, drought enduring.

Figure 4: Perennials. Native blue *Penstemon strictus* (left) and *P. grandiflorus* Prairie Jewel® (center and right).

Figure 5: Annuals Cleome ‘Senorita Rosalita’.

Annuals that require one quarter to one-half inch of additional water per week

Botanical Name Common Name	Exposure	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Height	Hardiness
Centaurea cyanus Cornflower, Bachelor Button	Sun – Part shade	White, pink, blue, purple	Jun-Sep	15-20 in.	Hardy, reseeds
Cosmos bipinnatis Cosmos	Sun	Pink, white, purple	Jul-Sep	36-48 in.	Tender, reseeds
Gazania rigens Gazania	Sun	White, yellow, orange	Jun-Oct	8-10 in.	Half-hardy
Gomphrena globosa Globe Amaranth	Sun	White, pink, lavender	Jun-Oct	12-24 in.	Tender
Lantana camara Lantana	Sun – Part shade	Yellow, white, orange, Numerous	Jun-Sep	12-24 in.	Tender
Lobularia maritima Sweet Alyssum	Sun – Part shade	White, violet, maroon	May-Sep	4-8 in.	Hardy
Mirabilis jalapa Four O'Clocks	Sun – Part shade	Yellow, pink, red, white	Jul-Sep	18-30 in.	Tender, reseeds
Petunia x hybrida Petunia	Sun – Part shade	Pink, white, yellow, violet, red, blue, Various	Jun-Oct	8-15 in.	Half hardy
Portulaca grandifloria Rose Moss	Sun	Pink, red, white, yellow, orange, Numerous	Jul-Oct	6-8 in.	Tender
Sanvitalia procumbens Creeping Zinnia, Trailing Sanvitalia	Sun	Yellow, orange	Jun-Sep	6-8 in.	Tender
Senecio cineraria Dusty Miller	Sun	White-Silver foliage	N/A	8-12 in.	Hardy
Tithonia rotundifolia Mexican Sunflower	Sun	Orange, red	Aug-Oct	12-40 in.	Tender
Scaevola aemula Fan Flower	Sun	White, blue, violet	Jul-Oct	6-12 in.	Tender

Figure 6: Perennials *Delosperma* Mesa Verde® (front) *D. nubigenum* (back).

Figure 7: Perennials *Berlandiera lyrata* (top) and *Lavandula angustifolia* (below).

Annuals that require one half to one inch of additional water per week

Botanical Name Common Name	Exposure	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Height	Hardiness
Catharanthus roseus Periwinkle, vinca	Sun	White, violet, rose, purple	Jun-Oct	8-14 in.	Tender
Cleome hassleriana Cleome, Spider Flower	Sun	Pink, white, purple	Jul-Sep	36-48 in.	Tender
Dianthus chinensis China Pinks	Sun – Part shade	White, pink, rose, red	May-Sep	8-12 in.	Hardy
Helichrysum bracteatum Strawflower	Sun	White, rose, yellow, orange, crimson	Aug-Oct	10-30 in.	Hardy
Ipomea batatus Sweet Potato Vine	Sun-Part shade	Not important	N/A	12-24 in. Vining	Tender
Limonium sinuatum Notchleaf Statice	Sun	White, yellow, blue, lavender	Aug-Oct	12-24 in.	Hardy
Nierembergia hippomanica violaceae Cup Flower	Sun	Violet, lavender, white	Jun-Sep	8 in.	Half hardy
Osteospermum species African Daisy, Cape Daisy	Sun	White, yellow, lavender, pink, orange	Jun-Sep	10-18 in.	Half hardy
Pennisetum setaceum Fountain Grass	Sun	Grown for foliage & plume	Jul-Oct	24-40 in.	Half hardy
Pentas lanceolata Egyptian Star Flower	Sun	Red, white, pink	Jun-Sep	12-20 in.	Tender
Rudbeckia hirta pulcherimma Gloriosa Daisy	Sun	Yellow, orange	Jul-Oct	12-30 in.	Hardy
Salvia farinacea Mealycup Sage	Sun – Part shade	Blue, lavender, white, rose	Jul-Oct	12-30 in.	Half hardy
Tagetes species Marigold	Sun	Yellow, orange, white, mahogany	Jun-Oct	6-30 in.	Half hardy
Tropaeolum majus Nasturtium	Sun	Red, orange, yellow	Jun-Sep	12 in.	Tender
Verbena x hybrida Garden Verbena	Sun	White, pink, pose, lavender, red, violet	Jun-Oct	12-18 in.	Tender
Zinnia hybrids Zinnia	Sun	White, yellow, red, orange, pink, rose	Jun-Oct	8-36 in.	Tender

Figure 8: Perennials *Rudbeckia fulgida* (top) and *Erigeron sp*. (below)

Annuals that require one to one and a half inches of additional water per week

Botanical Name Common Name	Exposure	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Height	Hardiness
Ageratum houstonianum Mexican Floss Flower	Sun – Part shade	Lavender, pink, blue, white	Jun-Oct	8-12 in.	Tender
Antirrhinum majus Snapdragon	Sun	White, yellow, pink, bronze, various	May-Oct	6-30 in.	Hardy
Argyranthemum species Marguerite Daisy	Sun	White, yellow, pink, various	Jun-Oct	6-36 in.	Half hardy
Bacopa species Bacopa, Water Hyssop	Sun – Part shade	Pink, white, lavender, various	May-Sep	3-6 in.	Tender
Celosia plumosa Feather Cockscomb	Sun	Yellow, orange, red, pink	Jul-Sep	15-24 in.	Tender
Heliotropium arborescens Heliotrope	Sun	Blue, purple	Jun-Sep	10-20 in.	Tender
Impatiens walleriana Impatiens	Sun – Shade	White, pink, rose, red, blue, copper	Jun-Sep	6-12 in.	Tender
Lobelia erinus Lobelia	Sun-Part shade	Blue, purple, white	May-Sep	4-12 in.	Tender
Nicotiana alata Nicotiana	Sun	Red, white, pink, lime-green	Jun-Sep	10-60 in.	Tender
Pelargonium x hortorum Zonal Geranium	Sun	White, pink, rose, red, orange	May-Oct	12-20 in.	Half hardy
Viola x wittrockiana Pansy – Ladies Delight	Sun - Part shade	White, blue, violet, yellow, orange, maroon	All year	4-8 in.	Very hardy

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