

25 Fast-Growing Perennials That Flower Their First Year From Seed

Perennial

Description

Garden Use

Culture

Seed Starting Tips

Summer Pastels' yarrow
(*Achillea* Summer Pastels')



Flat-topped clusters of tiny flowers in warm pastel shades atop a mound of aromatic, ferny foliage; 2 feet tall by 2 feet wide. Blooms in summer.

A beautiful softener for perennial borders. Combines well with daylilies (*Hemerocallis* cvs.) in coordinating shades and with fountain grass (*Pennisetum alopecuroides*).

Full sun. Average to lean, well-drained soil; avoid fertilizer. Fills in fast. Zones 3-9.

Start indoors 10-12 weeks before last spring frost. Transplant while soil is still cool; seedlings take light frost if hardened off gradually.

Snowdrop anemone
(*Anemone sylvestris*)



Dainty, nodding white flowers borne singly on 12- to 18-inch-tall flower stalks in late spring. Plant spreads quickly, but extras are easy to remove.

Combine with woodland wildflowers like blue Virginia bluebells (*Merensia virginica*), azaleas (*Rhododendron* spp.), and violets (*Viola* spp.) of all colors. Let it weave through other plants.

Part sun to full shade. Loose, humusy, well-drained soil. Zones 4-9.

Fresh seed boosts germination rate. Stratify seed in the refrigerator for 8 weeks before indoor sowing. Plant thickly, and be patient.

Golden marguerite
(*Anthemis tinctoria* 'Kelway')



Fermy, deep green foliage sparked by an abundance of buttery yellow, daisy-like flowers, to 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide. Blooms midsummer through fall.

This invaluable plant adds a relaxed feeling next to the spires of blue delphiniums (*Delphinium* spp.). Try it with balloon flower (*Platyodon grandiflorus*) and *Verbena canadensis* 'Homestead Purple'.

Full sun to part shade. Easy to grow in almost any soil. May self-sow. Zones 3-7.

Easy; no special treatment required. Germinates in about 2 weeks. Start indoors before last frost for earliest flowers.

Sea thrift
(*Armeria maritima*)



Ball-shaped heads of pink or mauve flowers arise in summer from dense tufts of grassy leaves, 6 to 12 inches high and less than a foot wide.

Good plant for the front of the garden, where it adds a nice vertical accent in bloom to the soft, silver leaves of lamb's ears (*Stachys byzantina*) or the spiky, gray mats of pinks (*Dianthus* spp.).

Sun to part shade in well-drained soils. In the South, grow in partial shade. Zones 4-8.

One of the easiest perennials to grow from seed. Takes about 2 weeks to sprout; flowers in as little as 12 weeks.

'Gay Butterflies' butterfly weed
(*Asclepias tuberosa* 'Gay Butterflies')



Vibrant orange and yellow flower clusters in summer on upright plants about 2 feet tall. Irresistible to butterflies.

Plan a hot garden around this perennial, with dahlias (*Dahlia* cvs.) or Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*); or tone it down with cool blue and purple companions.

Full sun. Well-drained, average soil. Drought tolerant. Zones 4-9.

Sow seeds directly in the garden in fall or early spring; its taproots resent transplanting. Plant thickly—germination rate is low.

Alpine aster
(*Aster alpinus*)



Single purple daisies with yellow middles dot gray-green foliage, which grows about 6 inches tall and about a foot across. Blooms early to mid summer.

Nice edger for the front of the garden. Combine with yellow coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.), hardy geraniums, (*Geranium* spp.), *Campanula carpatica*, or white *Achillea* 'The Pearl'.

Full sun. Average, well-drained soil. Short-lived, especially with hot, humid summers. Zones 5-7.

Germinates quickly, especially with extra warmth. Use heating cables or start seeds in a warm place, like the top of a TV.

Blackberry lily
(*Belamcanda chinensis*)



In early summer, stems emerging from strapy foliage produce vivid orange, 2-inch flowers speckled with red. Seedheads split open in fall to reveal shiny black seeds.

Great vertical accent for softer, mounded shapes. A good companion for blue flowers, or for hot-colored garden of yellows, reds, and oranges.

Thrives in full sun and well-drained soil. Mulch in cold winter areas. Zones 5-10.

Start indoors 10-12 weeks before last spring frost for earliest blooms. Seeds may take 3 weeks to sprout, then grow quickly.

Carpathian harebell
(*Campanula carpatica*
'Bellissimo')



Mound of crisp green leaves almost hidden by purple-blue flowers in summer. About 9 to 12 inches tall and a foot wide or more; spreads slowly.

Versatile plant for the front of the garden. Lovely with 'Gold Plate' yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina* 'Gold Plate'), early yellow daylilies, and 'Taplow Blue' globe thistle (*Echinops ritro* 'Taplow Blue').

Full sun to part shade in rich, moisture-retentive, well-drained soil. Mulch roots. Zones 3-8.

Cover seeds with a thin sprinkling of vermiculite; they'll sprout in 3 weeks or less.

Cupid's dart
(*Catananche caerulea*)



True-blue flowers on long, bare stems above a clump of long, slender leaves. About 2 feet tall by a foot across. Blooms from early summer through fall.

Stunning color. Plant in a mass big enough to be seen from a distance. Combine with golden coreopsis and white Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum* X *superbum*).

Full sun. Average, well-drained soil. Drought tolerant. Self-sows. Zones 3-8.

Simple from seed. No special treatment needed. Start indoors 8 weeks before last spring frost.

Red valerian,
Jupiter's beard
(*Centranthus ruber*)



Fleshy, gray-green foliage with domed spires of showy, red or crimson-pink flowers from late spring through early fall. From 1½ to 3 feet tall and 1½ feet across.

This butterfly attractor is great in the middle or back of the garden, with phlox (*Phlox paniculata*) in a coordinating pink or contrasting white, and chartreuse euphorbias (*Euphorbia* spp.).

Full sun to part shade. Average, well-drained soil. Tolerates drought. Zones 5-8.

Easy from seed; flowers will vary in color and may include white as well as red and pink.

Early Sunrise' coreopsis
(*Coreopsis grandiflora*
'Early Sunrise')



Pompoms of rich golden yellow rise above a tuft of narrow-leaved foliage and bloom all summer long. About 1 to 1½ feet tall in bloom.

Valued for its long period of bright yellow bloom. Combine with annual blue ageratum (*Ageratum houstonianum*), annual blue larkspur (*Consolida ambigua*), and silvery artemisias (*Artemisia* spp.).

Full sun. Almost any well-drained soil. Drought tolerant. Zones 4-9.

Easy from seed; no special treatment needed. Start indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost.

Southern Jesters'
daphnium
(*Daphnium*
'Southern Jesters')



Striking spires of close-packed, spurred flowers in shades of blue, purple, and white rise above lobed leaves. About 2 to 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide.

Beautiful with silver-foliated plants like artemisias, or with Oriental poppies (*Papaver orientale*), and others that bloom at the peak of perennial season in early summer.

Full sun. Rich, moisture-retentive but well-drained soil. Zones 3-8.

Use fresh seed. May take 3 weeks to germinate. Start indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost; set out when soil is still cool.

Cheddar pinks
(*Dianthus*
'gratianopolitanus')



Neat mounds of blue-gray foliage topped with fragrant, pink flowers spring through summer with a few until frost. About a foot tall and wide.

Appealing foliage combines well with just about any perennial. White or blue Siberian or bearded iris (*Iris* spp.) are a nice contrast.

Full sun. Well-drained soil. Lime-loving; mulch acid soil with limestone chips. Zones 3-8.

Sprouts a few days after sowing. Start indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost and transplant outdoors while soil is still cool.

Daisy feebare
(*Erigon speciosus*)



Cultivars like lavender-blue 'Adria' and 'Azure Beauty' or pink 'Rose Triumph' bear masses of small, feathery-petaled daisies from early to mid-summer.

Combine with bearded iris, Oriental poppies, and sea holly (*Eryngium* spp.). For a romantic look, partner with lacy artemisias and white or pale pink yarrows (*Achillea millefolium*).

Full sun. Moisture-retentive but well-drained soil. Zones 2-8; best in cooler climates.

Stratify seed for two months in the refrigerator before planting in pots, or plant in the garden in early fall for spring bloom.

Blanket flower
(*Gaillardia* X
'grandiflora')



Bright, two-toned daisy flowers with red-brown centers and a vivid rim of yellow on the petals. Rough, hairy foliage. Plants grow 2 to 3 feet tall by about 1½ feet wide.

Reliable though often short-lived perennial for the middle of the garden. Combine with sunny yellow coreopsis, true-blue bachelor's buttons (*Centaurea cyanus*) or ornamental grasses.

Full sun. Almost any well-drained soil. Tolerates drought. Self-sows moderately. Zones 3-8.

Very easy from seed. No special treatment needed. Start indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost.

Gaura
(*Gaura lindheimeri*)



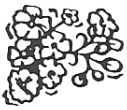
Large, airy plant with delicate, white flowers like a flock of butterflies on slender stems. Blooms from early summer to fall. 3 to 4 feet tall by 2 feet wide.

Gaura's delicate, see-through quality makes it suitable for the middle or front of the garden. Beautiful with blue Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) and pinks (*Dianthus* spp.).

Full sun. Absolutely well-drained soil. Thrives in drought, heat, and humidity. Zones 6-9.

Seed germinates in about 2 weeks. No special treatment needed. Sow indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost.

Baby's breath
(*Gypsophila paniculata*)



As ethereal as its name, this perennial makes a billow of branched stems dotted with small, pure-white flowers. To 4 feet tall and 4 feet wide. Blooms in summer.

Deep size best at the front or middle of the garden so it's not overpowered by more emphatic plants. A good foil for bearded iris and columbines (*Aquilegia* spp.).

Full sun. Absolutely well-drained soil; add calcium and magnesium for best flowering. Zones 4-9.

Do not cover. Germinates in about 10 days. Plant indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost in peat pots. Transplant pot and all.

Starburst Shasta daisy
(*Leucanthemum* X
superbum 'Starburst')



Snowy white, 4-inch daisies bloom for weeks beginning in early summer. Attractive clump of foliage is evergreen. Plants grow to 4 feet tall and 2 feet across.

A star in the back of the garden. Eye-catching, large, white daisies look good with speedwell (*Veronica spicata*), bearded iris, hardy geraniums, and Oriental poppies.

Full sun. Almost any well-drained soil. Zones 4-9.

Easy from seed. No special treatment needed. Start indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost.

Blue flax
(*Linum perenne*)



Graceful plant with tiny leaves and stems topped by delicate, blue flowers. Blooms from spring through early summer. 1½ feet tall by 1 foot wide.

Lovely with pale pink or bright crimson painted daisies (*Tanacetum coccineum*), all colors of columbines, and icy-white Shasta daisies. Use several plants in a grouping for best effect.

Full sun. Well-drained soil. Drought tolerant. Self-sows. Zones 5-8.

Easy, though germination may be slow. Start indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost. Transplant to garden while soil is still cool.

Rose campion
(*Lychnis coronaria*)



Cottage-garden favorite with felted, silvery-white foliage and stems accented in summer by cense flowers atop the branching stems. To 2½ feet tall and 1½ feet wide.

Create a cottage-garden jumble with biennial dame's rocket (*Hesperis matronalis*), bachelor's buttons, hollyhocks (*Alcea* spp.), old roses, and other informal plants.

Full sun. Rich, well-drained soil. Short-lived, but self-sows to replace itself. Zones 4-8.

Scarify seed before starting indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost.

Musk mallow
(*Malva moschata*)



Beautiful, satiny flowers from summer into fall on a bushy, branching plant with divided leaves. To 3 feet tall and 2 feet wide.

Excellent with garden phlox (*Phlox paniculata*); fine partner for daylilies; later with *Helipopsis helianthoides* var. *scabra* 'Summer Sun' and *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sulrivantii* 'Goldsturm'.

Full sun to part shade; in hot-summer areas provide afternoon shade. Well-drained soil. Zones 4-8.

Stratify seed 8 weeks before starting indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost. Some will sprout even without pretreatment.

Sundrops
(*Oenothera fruticosa*
ssp. *glauca*)



Cheerful, yellow, half-inch flowers top contrasting red stems. Blooms throughout summer. 2 to 3 feet tall and 1 foot wide.

Brighten beds with this reliable perennial, which mixes well with the mound-shaped form and deep purple color of salvias like *Salvia* X *gylvestris* 'May Night' and *S. nemorosa* 'East Friesland'.

Full sun. Almost any well-drained soil. Tolerates dry soils. Zones 4-8.

Germinates easily in darkness, but prone to damping-off. Sow indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost.

Black-eyed Susan
(*Rudbeckia fulgida*)



Familiar, beloved daisy with golden petals and dark, central disk. Summer blooms. To 2½ feet tall and 2 feet across.

Indispensable, thanks to its abundant, long-blooming flowers. Combines well with ornamental grasses, blazing star (*Liatis* spp.), and sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus* cvs.).

Full sun. Average, well-drained soil. Drought tolerant. Zones 4-9.

Seed is simple to start. Sow indoors 6-8 weeks before last spring frost.

Speedwell
(*Veronica spicata*)



Tiny blue flowers on long spikes. Blooms up to 2 months, starting in summer. Grows to 2 feet tall and 3 feet wide.

Good vertical line—thanks to the spikes—for the front and middle of a garden. Great in a mass with yellow daylilies and 'Moonbeam' coreopsis.

Full sun. Absolutely well-drained soil. Zones 3-8.

Start seed indoors 8-10 weeks before last frost. Use a fine-textured, fast-draining medium. Barely cover seeds.

Horned violet
(*Viola cornuta*)



Low, tufted plant with oval leaves topped by 1½-inch-wide mauve flowers in spring. To about 6 inches tall and wide.

Use as ground cover or accent. Beautiful with spring bulbs, perennial candytuft (*Iberis sempervirens*), and bleeding heart (*Dicentra spectabilis*).

Full sun to part shade. Fertile, well-drained soil. Zones 5-9.

Easy from seed. Sow indoors 8-10 weeks before last spring frost. Cover lightly; seeds germinate quickly.