

Perennials: by Master Gardener Barbara Mannen

Every serious gardener will usually have some perennials as the backbone of their garden. Perennials are plants, bulbs, and shrubs that will come back and bloom each year. Perennials will multiply and will need to be divided every few years and thus giving you more plants for yourself and plants to give to your friends. I love to think of the one who gave me a certain plant as I look at those plants in my garden and especially if that person is no longer living.

Since I love flowers, I have planted different ones to give me blooms in spring, summer, fall, and winter. My spring favorites are daffodils, iris, and tulips. Summer I will have crape myrtles, dianthus, coreopsis, oriental and Asian lilies, day lilies and cannas. Fall I will have chrysanthemums and autumn sage and salvia, and winter I will have dianthus and pansies which are annuals blooming.

Before purchasing and planting your perennials or annuals, be sure to be aware of each plant's requirements. Does this plant require full sun, moist soil, dry soil, acidic or alkaline soil to flourish? You have to be aware of its requirements for that plant survive and look its best. I live in a rural area and all my plants survive with very little watering and they are classified as drought resistant. Also, it is more pleasing to the eyes to have a repeat of some of the same plants and colors throughout your garden, instead of just one of each color and variety.

Two great reference books are Tough Plants for Southern Gardens, by Felder Rushing and Easy Gardens for North Central Texas, by Steve Huddleston and Pamela Crawford.

During this extended and seemingly never ending drought, be sure to care for your established trees and shrubs, especially if you're not watering your yard. Water early in the morning, using drip irrigation whenever you can. If you have a sprinkler system, check to be sure you aren't wasting water with a leak or a broken head. Program the system to run in the very early morning. Try very hard not to water the concrete. Be prepared for watering restrictions to be put in place and enforced if we don't get rain. It's going to take all of us working together to conserve the water we have.

Please send your gardening questions to wichitamg@gmail.com and visit our website at www.overthegardengate.org.