

Peter Seales®

World Leaders in Classic Roses

# Perennials for all Purposes



# Perennials for all Purposes

## Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of herbaceous perennials with their amazing diversity in colour, shape and form. As an artist uses water colours, acrylics or oils to create a pleasing work of art, plants are the medium with which to compose a picture on the canvas of your garden. As works of art can vary from the imposing work by Michael Angelo in the Sistine chapel to the delicate portrait miniatures beloved by the English and French during the 16th century so too do our individual gardens, both in style and size. If we think of perennials as being just one type of medium to paint our three dimensional work of art then there is no need to be confused by long lists of names. These are but tools to help us create our picture as we become more familiar with them we will discover there is a perennial plant to meet most of our requirements whether it is in creating our particular style or meeting the needs of our particular plot.

Herbaceous perennials have been used in various ways over the years including the long borders at Greenwich Park, the Island beds inspired by Alan Bloom. The vibrant mixed planting of Christo at Great Dixter and the inspirational and educational gardens of the dry and damp gardens of Beth Chatto to the naturalistic sweeping prairie style at Sussex Prairie garden or the mono colour planting schemes of Vita Sackville-West at Sissinghurst. In a small way this is an introduction into a Pandora's box of possibilities which is only limited by ones own imagination.

# Perennials for all Purposes

What are “herbaceous perennials”?

Herbaceous refers to a green plant i.e. non woody which dies down in winter and a perennial is a plant which completes its life cycle in more than two years, as opposed to annuals which last for only one year and biennials two. However “perennials” can be evergreen and could include strong growing alpinas, bulbs or corms. This categorization is somewhat blurred and open to interpretation.

## Don't be afraid of the Latin names

If you can familiarise yourself with a few Latin words you may well find them to be helpful in the description and habit of a plant, here are a few to start off with:-

Nana / minima	Small
Grandi/ maxima/ magnificum	large
Prostrata	low growing
Flora/ flore	flower
Folia	foliage
Rubra	red
Rosea	pink
Purpureus/ violaceum	purple
Luteus/ flavens/ corocus	yellow
Caeruleus	blue
Viridis/ virens/nemorosum	green
Alba/ candida	white
Pallida	cream
Plena/ pleno	double

# Perennials for all Purposes

What are “herbaceous perennials”? cont. and care

Unus/ simplex/ caeleps	single
Marginata	margin (as in “edge of”, usually leaf)
Palustris	from the marshes
Pratensis	from the field
Montana	from the mountains
Rivalis	near to rivers

Therefore ‘*Caltha palustris flore pleno*’ is a double flowered caltha which comes from marshy regions. ‘*Geranium pratense Violaceum flore-pleno*’ is a geranium with purple, double flowers which comes from the fields. This not only gives a description of the plant regarding colour of flower or foliage but also its growing habit and the conditions in which it would be most happy in.

## Care of different soils

As the old time farmers understood if you looked after the soil then the soil would return a harvest, the same is true in the garden. Soil types vary considerably from heavy clay, rich loam through to sand and almost all can be encouraged to grow plants with a little forethought and effort.

## Clay soils

Retain moisture and nutrients very well but can be hard to work and remain colder in the spring. To improve, add sharp sand and plenty of organic matter.

# Perennials for all Purposes

## Care

### Light sandy soils

Warm up early in the spring and are easy to work but they do not retain moisture well and hence nutrients are easily leached through. To improve, add plenty of organic matter during planting and yearly mulching in the spring and autumn.

Soil preparation will save time, money and possible disappointment through loss or poor results.

Plants, like most living organisms such as us require three things, water, food and an environment which enables them to flourish with the minimum of stress. A question that is so often asked is how often should I water, the simple answer is when the plant needs it. Without trying to bamboozle you with too much technical information plants take up food in solution, they require water to give them stability within their structure and to enable them to maintain a healthy temperature. Perennials vary in size, leaf shape and texture and rate of growth. From this you can gather that for such a diverse plant group originating from the four corners of the globe and from many different habitats there is no one simple answer. However as a guide, silver leaved, hairy leaved and fleshy leaved plants have adapted in their natural habitat to need less moisture, whereas at the other end of the scale plants such as dahlias with hollow stems and a large leaf area need copious amounts.

Feeding involves the application of a general purpose fertilizer during the spring and again in the early autumn with a feed that contains less nitrogen. The most important thing is to maintain the organic matter content within the soil to enable it to retain moisture and hold on to the available nutrients by mulching as much as is possible.

# Perennials for all Purposes

## Care

Staking may well be required for the larger varieties and a wide range of metal or wooden supports are available or if preferred unobtrusive hedge trimmings.

## What happens when they have become over crowded?

As a general rule of thumb perennials need to be lifted and divided every three years to avoid them dying off in the middle and losing vigour. This is a simple task which can be carried out either in spring when the new growth starts to appear or after flowering. It also gives a chance to add organic matter back into the soil at the same time. Either split up using the two fork method or an old kitchen knife is very useful.

## Last thought

Although perennials can be encouraged to grow in most situations please think where they might have originated in the wild and choose those varieties which suit your location. It would be possible to grow an astilbe in full sun on sandy soil *if* you were prepared to lay on a constant supply of water and overhead shading, but would it thrive? There is such a wonderful selection of perennials available that there is sure to be one that meets your needs. Most importantly please do a little research and do not be afraid to ask a member of staff for advice - we are there to help!

Enjoy the exciting, diverse and beautiful world of perennials.

# Perennials for all Purposes

Plant suggestions for different situations

## Perennials for full sun

(Genus only. There are many cultivated varieties of each which can be tailored to your specific requirements)

Agastache

Eryngium

Verbena bonariensis

Cynara cardunculus

Nepeta x faassenii

Scabiosa varieties

Artemisia ludoviciana

Achillea

Salvia (perennial varieties)

Sedum

Dahlia (lift over winter to protect from wet and cold)

Carex

Stachys byzantina

Kniphofia

Anemone x hybrida

Anthemis

Phlox

Dianthus

Delosperma

Oenothera

Gaillardia

Helenium

Iris germanica

Papaver

Verbascum

Anemanthele lessoniana

Pennisetum

Stipa

Erysium

Osteospermum

Echinops

**Dry soil perennials** (Genus only as a guideline. The fun part is choosing your cultivars to paint your own garden!)

Galega

Eryngium

Echinops

Perovskia

Achillea

# Perennials for all Purposes

Plant suggestions for different situations

Artemesia

Eryngium

Sedum

Salvia (some)

Geranium macrorrhizum

Stachys byzantine

Bergenia

## Perennials for Clay soil

Persicaria

Veronicastrum

Astrantia

Aster

Geum

Brunnera

Alchemilla

Primula

Veronica

Ajuga

Hosta

## Perennials for pots and containers

Erysimum

Euphorbia x martinii

Dianthus

Heuchera

Potentilla

Hosta

Hemerocallis

Bergenia

Viola labradorica

Ajuga

Geranium sanguineum cultivars

Agapanthus

Aster

Campanula

Coreopsis

Epimedium

Erigeron

Erysimum

Gaura

Gazania

Helleborus

Primula

Salvia

Sedum

Tiarella

Verbena



# Perennials for all Purposes

Plant suggestions for different situations

## Perennials for Dry shade

Anemathele lessoniana  
Euphorbia  
Digitalis  
Geranium pratense cultivars  
Ophiopogon planiscapus  
Liriope  
Ajuga  
Digitalis x mertonensis  
Tiarella  
Euphorbia robbiae  
Geranium macrorrhizum  
Epimedium  
Polygonatum  
Alchemilla mollis

Geranium nodosum  
G.phaem  
Liriope muscari  
Luzula nivea  
Helleborus  
Hosta  
Rudbeckia  
Ligularia  
Filipendula  
Miscanthus sinensis  
Iris sibirica  
Astilbe  
Tradescantia virginiana

## Perennials for shade/ moist shade

Alchemilla mollis  
Bergenia  
Brunnera  
Dicentra  
Dryopteris filix-mas  
Epimedium  
Euphorbia amygdaloides

## Perennials for ground cover

Achillea  
Ajuga  
Alchemilla  
Anemone (Japanese type)  
Aster (Symphyotrichum)  
Astilbe  
Aubretia  
Bergenia  
Brunnera  
Campanula  
Dianthus

# Perennials for all Purposes

Plant suggestions for different situations

Epimedium  
Erigeron  
Euphorbia  
Gallium  
Geranium  
Geum  
Heuchera  
Heucherella  
Hosta  
Iberis  
Lamium  
Lysimachia  
Nepeta  
Persicaria  
Phlox  
Potentilla  
Pulmonaria  
Sedum  
Stachys  
Symphytum  
Tellima  
Tiarella  
Thymus  
Veronica  
Viola

## Perennials for wet soils

(on the margins of ponds and actually in water)

Caltha palustris  
Gunnera sp  
Houttiynia  
Juncus sp  
Spartina  
Carex pseudocyperis

## Perennials for Bog

**Gardens** (damp soil which rarely dries out)

Eupatorium  
Astilbe sp  
Geum rivale  
Gunnera sp  
Hererocallis  
Hosta  
Iris ensata  
Iris sibirica  
Lobelia cardinalis  
Ligularia  
Lychnis flos-cuculi  
Lysimachia  
Lythrum

# Perennials for all Purposes

## Plant suggestions for different situations

Persicaria amplexicaulis	Echium
Phalaris arundinacea	Erigeron
Primula (candelabra/drumstick type)	Eryngium
Rheum palmatum	Festuca glauca
Rogersia	Gaillardia
Schizostylis	Helianthemum
Trollius	Osteospermum
Matteucia	Crambe cordifolia
Asplenium	Erysimum
Onoclea	Sedum
Osmunda	Stachys
	Euphorbia
	Verbascum bombyciferum
	Kniphofia
	Geranium sanguineum
	Sedum
	Aster
	Centaurea dealbata
	Molinia
	Dianthus deltoids
	Lathyrus latifolius

## Perennials for seaside gardens

Achillea  
Armeria  
Centranthus  
Crocsmia



*Peter Beales*<sup>®</sup>

London Road Attleborough Norfolk England NR17 1AY  
info@peterbealesroses.com www.classicroses.co.uk  
Tel: 01953 454707 Fax: 01953 456845

Updated 12042018