

C.L. Fornari's List of Reliable Perennials for a kaleidoscope of color through the seasons

What makes a top-performing perennial?

1. It has to live reliably for at least 4 years.
2. It does not take over or need frequent dividing.
3. It doesn't self-seed prolifically but gentle self-seeding is welcomed.
4. It is, by and large, disease and insect resistant.
5. It doesn't usually need staking.
6. Of course, you have to use the right cultivar (named variety), place it in the right growing conditions for that plant, and treat it well.

*Native to North America

Spring

Aurinia saxatilis (basket of gold) – sun

**Amsonia hubrichtii* (Arkansas blue star - z 5 – Sun)

Dicentra spectabilis (bleeding heart – z 3 – part sun/shade) and

**Dicentra eximia* (fern leaf bleeding heart) & 'Gold Heart'

**Tiarella* 'Spring Symphony' (foam flower – z4 – pt shade/shade)

**Stylophorum diaphyllum* (wood poppy or celadine poppy - pt shade/shade)

Epimedium species and hybrids (shade – weed smothering)

Helleborus x hybridus or *orientalis* (Lenten rose – shade)

Note: *Helleborus niger*, the Christmas rose, is also great – winter flowering.

Early Summer

Papaver orientale (oriental poppy – sun, goes dormant in heat)

Peonia (Peony – sun)

**Baptisia australis* (false indigo - zone 3 - sun/part sun)

Nepeta faassenii 'Walkers Low' (catmint – z3 – sun)

Persicaria polymorpha (Giant fleece flower – z4 – sun)

Alchmilla mollis (Lady's mantle – part-sun to part-shade)

Campanula poscharskyana (Serbian bellflower sun/part-shade)

**Crysgogonum virginianum* (green and gold, sun/part-shade)

Geranium macrorrhizum (z3 – sun/part shade)

Heuchera hybrids (Coral bells part shade – some are native) Two varieties shown were Pinot Gris and Southern Comfort.

Mid-Summer

**Asclepias tuberosa* (butterfly weed – Sun – self seeds)

Platycodon grandiflorus short hybrids (balloon flower z3 sun)

Agastache ‘Blue Fortune’ (blue fortune hyssop – z5 – sun) can need replacing after 3 or 4 years.

**Phlox paniculata* the Volcano series (Volcano phlox – sun)

Hemerocallis species and hybrids (daylilies – z3 – sun/pt sun) Look for July into August flowering. Shown: South Seas, Final Touch, Early Bird Cardinal.

‘Stella de Oro’ must be cleaned right after flowering because there is nothing more ugly than an un-deadheaded ‘Stella’. Ditto ‘Happy Returns’

Stokesia laevis (Stokes aster – zone 5 – sun) some flop so look for Peachie’s Pick and Mel’s Blue.

**Phlox paniculata* ‘Jeana’ (Jeana phlox – sun to part-shade)

Kirengeshoma palmata (yellow waxbells – z5 – pt sun or shade)

Late-Summer into Fall

**Hibiscus moscheutos* hybrids (rose mallow– sun/part sun)

Calamintha nepetoides (calamint – sun)

Perovskia atriplicifolia (Russian sage – z4 - sun)

Dendranthema ‘Sheffield Pink’ (Korean mums – sun)

**Vernonia lettermannii* ‘Iron Butterfly’ – sun

Hosta hybrids (hosta – zone 4 – part sun to shade)

Actaea simplex ‘Brunette’ and similar (part-sun to shade)

Foliage Plants

Hakonechloa macra ‘Aureola’ (hakon grass – z 5-pt sun/shd)

Athyrium felix-femina (lady fern z 4 Part Shade/Shade)

Carex species and hybrids (sedge – part-shade to shade – some native)