

Perennial Plants that Deserve Gold Medals

As an extension agent I am often asked by landscapers and residents, “Which are the best perennials to install in the landscape?” That is a tough question, due to the fact that each plant has specific requirements for it to flourish. Some plants will do well with full sunlight exposure while others do better in shade or partial shade. Others like water or wet feet while others need well drained soil to survive. In addition, most people install plants in their landscape to improve on its aesthetics. Remember the old saying; beauty is in the eyes of the beholder which could mean that the plant I like, is not the one you like. The following are some plants that do well in Central Florida:

Butterfly milkweed (*Asclepias*) attracts butterflies and pollinating insects with its bright orange flowers.

Blanket flower (*Gaillardia*) comes in several durable varieties. It has colorful red, orange and yellow flowers and prefers well-drained soils.

Chrysanthemums vary widely. The ‘pot mums’ we get at the florist may not be adapted for growth outside. You can try them but they may do poorly. Oxeye daisy, Shasta daisy, Gold and Silver (*Chrysanthemum pacificum*) and Ryan’s daisy should grow well outside.

Coreopsis is the Florida’s state wildflower; comes in several varieties and is one of the easiest perennials to grow. Most *Coreopsis* varieties will bloom again later that year if they are deadheaded. To deadhead plants, remove old flowers after they bloom.

Daylily varieties are innumerable. Some bloom again and again. Select several varieties including some ever-bloomers to extend the flower show. The ever-bloomers will need to be fertilized again and watered well after the first bloom.

Plumbago is an old fashioned perennial with light blue or white flowers.

Rudbeckia and its close relative, purple cone flower, do well in many gardens. Produce large yellow flowers during the summer and does not like prolonged wet weather.

Salvias like mealy sage and Mexican sage are tough. Unlike annual salvia, they bloom blue, white, or bicolor. Pineapple sage is a late blooming red salvia variety.

Stokesia is also called Stokes’ Aster. It blooms in the summer for a long time, is used in borders and as a cut flower. The flower can be blue or white.

Golden Shrimp Plant add immensely to the landscape with its yellow bloom from spring through fall.

I hope you enjoy my plant selection. For more information on horticulture, contact Grantly Ricketts at UF/IFAS Extension in Osceola County at gricketts@ufl.edu or by phone 321-697-3000.