

RGA Gardening Fact Sheet #4: *Perennial Flowers* for Partial Shade to Full Shade

Gardening enhances our personal and community space. All plants, from trees to flowers, beautify our living area, provide edible food and offer environmental benefits ranging from the oxygen we breathe to creating summer shade to cool our homes. By growing plants, we better appreciate our natural environment and the ecological relationships between soil, water and climate. Gardening helps the young to the young-at-heart understand the responsible use and protection of our natural environment, as well as the impact we have on the “big picture” of environmental stewardship.

With support from the Conexus Credit Union's (CCU) Community Investment Program, the Regina Garden Associates (RGA) at the Regina Floral Conservatory aim to promote environmental stewardship through a series of gardening fact sheets, teaching appreciation of growing plants and basic gardening practices to the general public. Visit the Regina Floral Conservatory often and continue learning about gardening through our fact sheets.



Regina Garden Associates Inc.

Perennial Flowers

Perennial flowers, or perennials, grow for more than two years; dieback over winter and in the next spring, new growth comes from the existing rootstock. Perennial flowers are typically sold in garden centres as potted plants.

It is possible to grow perennials from seed. Once established in the garden, many existing perennial plants can be further propagated by simple division and re-planting.

Partial Shade to Full Shade Gardening

Perennials need sunlight to carry out photosynthesis to survive and grow. However, the need for the length of direct sunlight varies by species. Gardeners have created general categories or “rules of thumb” for this exposure from full sun to partial sun/shade to full shade. When purchasing potted perennials at your garden centre, check the plant label for the rating of preferred light category for best growth. A full sun category is six+ hours of direct sunlight and full shade is less than four hours sunlight, usually present in the morning and filtered by tree canopy or structures like a building and fence. Partial shade and partial sun are similar categories with four to six hours of sunlight. Partial shade is four to six hours of sunlight in the morning and partial sunlight is four to six hours of sunlight in the afternoon. Under partial to full sun lighting, gardeners have the greatest number of choices for plant species/cultivar. This Gardening Fact Sheet suggests a selection of perennial flowers which are suited to growing in partial sun to full sun for southern Saskatchewan, Canada.

Importance of Plant Hardiness

Successfully growing perennials begins first by selecting plants having a hardiness to survive the local growing conditions. When purchasing potted perennials at a garden centre, check the plant tag and determine the plant hardiness rating. Based on long-term climatic data and plant survival, scientists in Canada and United States have created plant hardiness zone maps. In

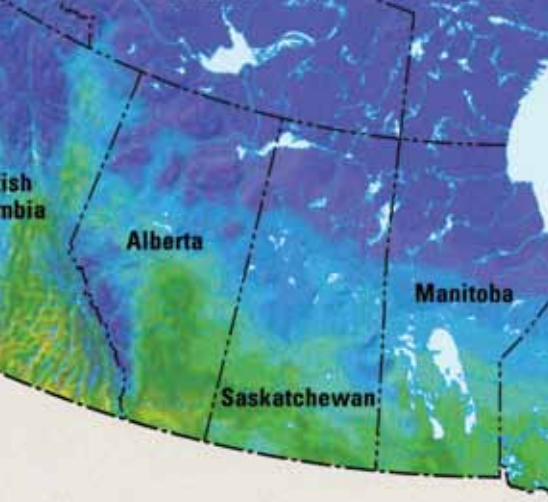
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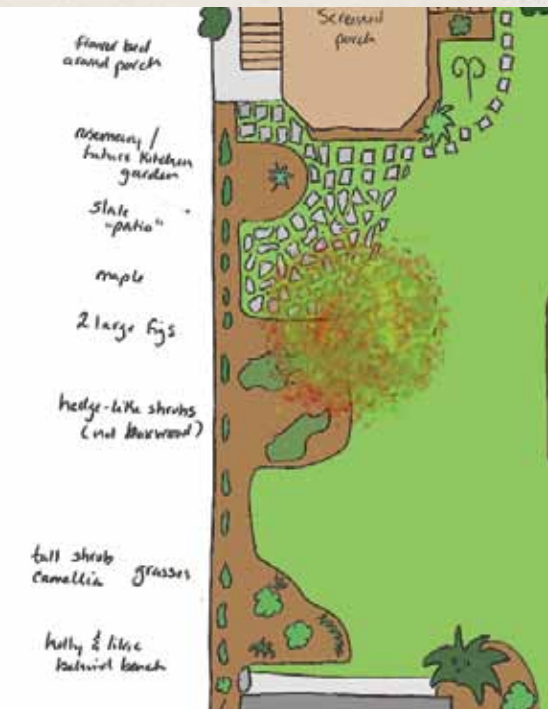
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Importance of Plant Hardiness (cont.)

Canada, there are 8 zones further subdivided into “a” and “b” subcategories. In Canada, plant survival data is linked to minimum winter temperatures as well as other climatic factors like the frost-free period, summer rainfall, maximum temperatures, snow cover, January rainfall and maximum wind speed. This rating can be further modified by the microclimates created from a surrounding warmer urban area as well as site conditions like degree of snow cover and protection from wind. Southern Saskatchewan falls within the Canadian plant hardiness zones of 2a to 3b. It is possible to grow perennials rated at higher categories, but there will be a much higher risk that they will not survive on a year to year basis over time.



Source: flickr.com

Garden Design

A suggestion in the design process is to stake out and measure the planting area under consideration. At the minimum, it will inform you on matching the space requirements to plant characteristics for height and spread. Take some digital photos of the location and keep them handy for reference. Consider the orientation of the property, location of existing features like trees and the timing and extent of sunlight available. With this information, use graph paper to sketch a base plan from which you can consider your design options.

To help you consider, make a checklist of questions on your needs. For example, will the planting be a ground cover in full sun or partial sun? Are there preferences in the desired plant heights and plant spreads as well as the plant textures and foliage colours? Do you want a mass planting for a particular perennial flower? Do you seek overlapping bloom periods so as to have blooming through an entire growing season? How will the perennial flowers form part of the property's larger picture of trees, shrubs, grasses and ferns existing or proposed?



Source: flickr.com

Choosing Perennial Plants

The following tables provide a selection of shade-loving hardy perennial flowers for zones 2a-3b. The plants are divided into ground cover and height categories for perennial edging and borders. You will see the plant description listed by common name as well as botanical Genus, a common method used by garden centres to organize their perennial flowers. Individual plant species/cultivars are described by mature flowering height, spread, texture, foliage colour, flower colour and bloom period. Where a Genus contains multiple cultivars that are suitable, a representative single cultivar is presented. All plant characteristics are sourced from Net PS Plant Finder Tool plant summaries. The tables are a starting point to further your research for photo images and additional growing information.

Other Resources

Online

Net PS Plant Finder Tool – Dutch Growers, Saskatoon: plants.dutchgrowers.ca/11040002

Perennials.com – Online Perennial Resource by Heritage Perennials of Valleybrook Gardens, Abbotsford, British Columbia.

Reference Texts

Hanbidge, Patricia and Laura Peters. *Perennials for Saskatchewan and Manitoba*.

Skinner, Hugh and Sara Williams. *Best Groundcovers & Vines for the Prairies*.

Toop, Edgar W. and Sara Williams. *Perennials for the Plains and Prairies*.

Valleau, John M., *Perennial Gardening Guide*.

Williams, Sara. *Creating the Prairie Xeriscape*.

Selection of Hardy Perennial Flowers Full Shade to Partial Shade



Ajuga
Source: jacki-dee, flickr.com

Ground Cover

Genus	Common	Hardiness	Height	Spread	Texture	Foliage	Flower	Bloom Period
Ajuga	Black Scallop Bugleweed	3b	6"	24"	Medium	Purple	Purple	May-June
Alchemilla	Lady's Mantle	2a	18"	18"	Medium	Lime	Yellow	June-July
Convallaria	Lily-of-the-Valley	1b	6"	24"	Coarse	Drk Green	White	May-June
Galium	Sweet Woodruff	2b	8"	24"	Fine	Drk Green	White	May-June
Lamium	Chequers Spotted Dead Nettle	2a	12"	24"	Fine	Green with Wht stripes	Purple	May-Sept
Vinca	Common Periwinkle	3a	4"	24"	Medium	Green	Lavender	May-June



Bergenia

Edging & Border Short Height of ≤ 12"

Genus	Common	Hardiness	Height	Spread	Texture	Foliage	Flower	Bloom Period
Pulmonaria	Lungwort	2a	12"	18"	Med	Green/Silver	Blue	May-June
Bergenia	Bergenia	1b	12"	18"	Coarse	Green	Fuchsia	May



Astilbe

Edging & Border Medium Height of > 12" - 39"

Genus	Common	Hardiness	Height	Spread	Texture	Foliage	Flower	Bloom Period
Astilbe	Fanal Astilbe	2b	24"	32"	Fine	Emerald	Crimson	June-July
Brunnera	Siberian Bugloss	2b	16"	18"	Coarse	Green	Blue	May-June
Heuchera	Splendens Coral Bells	3a	18"	12"	Fine	Green	Red	June-July
Hosta	First Frost Hosta	2a	18"	36"	Med	Grn/Gold Margins	Lavender	July-Aug
Polygonatum	Variegated Solomon's Seal	3a	24"	36"	Med	Green/Wht Variegation	White	June-July



Cimicifuga

Border Tall Height of > 39"+

Genus	Common	Hardiness	Height	Spread	Texture	Foliage	Flower	Bloom Period
Aruncus	Goat's Beard	2a	48"	36"	Medium	Emerald	White	June-July
Cimicifuga	Bugbane	3a	60"	36"	Coarse	Drk Green	White	July-Aug
Filipendula	Meadowsweet	2b	60"	32"	Fine	Green	Pink	June-July
Ligularia	Othello Rayflower	3a	48"	30"	Coarse	Drk Green	Yellow	July-Sept



Front banner: Hosta

Source: Sarah Roseneau, flickr.com

Above: Galium

Source: Maja Dumat, flickr.com