

EASY-CARE PERENNIALS: Add These to Your Shopping List

Is there really such a thing as a no-fail plant? Not really. But there are perennials that are ridiculously easy to grow. I'm talking about those plants that once you get them established in the garden, there's really nothing else to do except perhaps annual clean-up of the spent plant. No deadheading, no staking or tying up, no spraying or fertilizing necessary. Do these plants really exist? Yes! Check out my shopping list of almost no-care perennials. Start with five sunny favorites, then move to six shade-lovers on the next page. 🌱

—James A. Baggett



Drought-tolerant

TALL SEDUM

Hylotelephium 'Autumn Joy'

WHY IT'S SO GREAT Besides its year-round good looks, 'Autumn Joy' can be considered among the most popular perennials of all time because it's practically indestructible. It's not invasive, it rarely needs to be dug up and divided and it's not particularly bothered by pests. 'Autumn Joy' always delivers in my garden: It produces delicate bright-pink flowers on large heads that age into a deep rose-red and then a beautiful copper-rust color in autumn that persists through winter. A stout, spreading plant with succulent foliage, it pairs well with ornamental grasses and against the deep-green leaves of summer perennials. Tall sedums are super easy to care for and very adaptable. This sedum lasts and lasts when other plants begin to wane.

Need to Know: Masses of tiny pink starlike flowers in late summer; full sun; 18 to 24 in. tall and wide; cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 9

Painted lady butterflies flock to tall sedums in late summer.



Learn how to select the best plants with our shopping tips.

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HEN & CHICKS

Sempervivum tectorum

Succulent

WHY IT'S SO GREAT Sometimes called houseleeks, hen and chicks are attractive outdoor succulents prized for their charming foliage and extremely resilient nature. They resemble an unfurled rose with seasonal blushes of colors and can form dense mats that can carpet the front of the border or along a path. Regardless of drought, deep freezes and poor soil, hen and chicks grow easily and will brighten any planting with eye-catching color, forms and textures.

Need to Know: Red-purple flowers rise on upright stalks in summer from attractive rosette foliage; full sun; 6 to 12 in. tall, 6 to 18 in. wide; cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8

SUN-LOVING PERENNIALS



Leaves are marbled in shades of chartreuse.

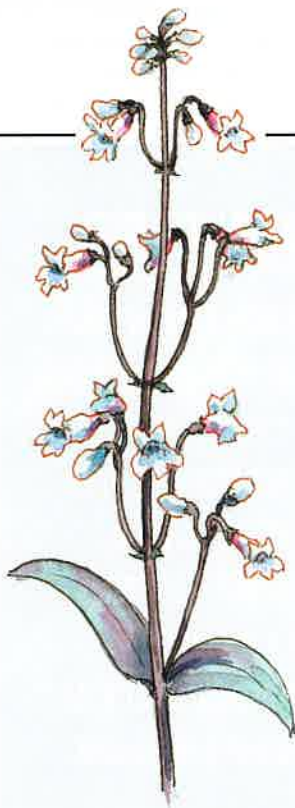
HARDY GERANIUM

Geranium 'Rozanne'

WHY IT'S SO GREAT Never mind that the flowers of 'Rozanne' seem to almost glow in the garden, it boasts bigger blooms, greater heat tolerance and a longer bloom time than all previous hardy geraniums. Look closely and you'll see that the center of each vibrant violet-blue blossom has a white eye with darker violet-blue lines along the petals (nectar guides for pollinators). Its strong constitution and ability to adapt to a wide range of conditions means there's very little that can go wrong.

Need to Know: Violet-blue flowers from late spring to early fall; full sun to part shade; 12 to 18 in. tall, 12 to 24 in. wide; cold hardy in USDA zones 5 to 8

Workhorse



PENSTEMON

Penstemon digitalis 'Husker Red'

WHY IT'S SO GREAT This hybrid of a Midwestern native has distinctive dark red foliage and tubular white blossoms blushed in pink. 'Husker Red' (it was bred in Nebraska) adds a dramatic contrast to a garden's sea of green, with its elegant burgundy leaves and deep purple stems. 'Husker Red' is so popular, it was awarded the Perennial Plant of the Year in 1996. I especially love how it politely seeds around my garden, filling in holes with its delicate blossoms and deep maroon leaves.

Need to Know: Pink-white tubular flowers in late spring and summer; full sun; 28 to 32 in. tall, 15 to 18 in. wide; cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8

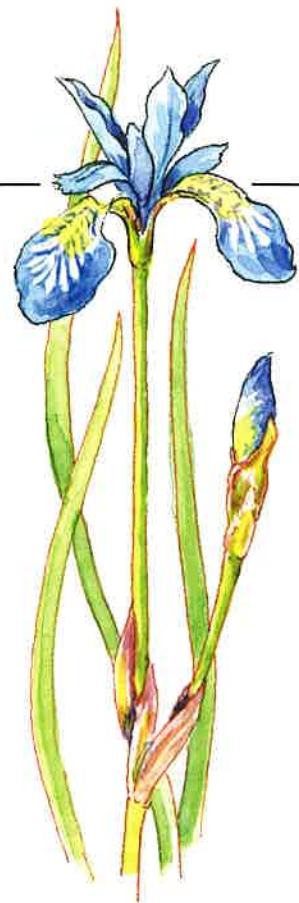
Native

SIBERIAN IRIS

Iris sibirica

WHY IT'S SO GREAT Although the flowers are smaller and more delicate than bearded iris, Siberian iris is the easiest to grow of all the irises. Its graceful stems, blooms, foliage, and neat appearance makes it super adaptable. The exquisite flowers bloom in a wide range of colors and color combinations, the arching standards and undulating falls fluttering in the gentlest breeze. The handsome grasslike foliage forms a vase-shaped clump and is attractive all year, even when the first frost turns leaves a rusty red-brown.

Need to Know: Flowers in colors that include blue, lavender, purple, white, yellow, pink and wine in late spring into early summer; full sun to part shade; 3 to 4 ft. tall, 2 to 3 ft. wide; cold hardy in USDA zones 3 to 8



Graceful

SHOPPING TIP:

MAKE SURE YOUR PLANT HAS A TAG AND READ IT FOR EXPOSURE, HARDINESS AND MATURE SIZE. THE RIGHT PLANT IN THE RIGHT PLACE WILL BE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO INSECTS AND DISEASE.