



Perennial Growing Tips

Looking for year-round color in your garden? Read one Kentucky gardener's favorite perennial picks and some perennial growing tips, too.

By Karri Sandino

Yes! The brilliant, blooming perennials and annuals at the local nursery might catch your eye this spring as you begin your gardening.

But don't overlook the ones sporting pretty green foilage--and, more importantly, later blooming times. You'll be craving their colors come summer and fall.

That's one tip gardening expert Jamie Dockery offers a group of gardeners--from beginners to experienced--during a class at the Arboretum in Lexington, Ky.

"Perennials bloom at different times during the season," he says. "Consider the textures of the plants you choose for when the blooms are gone."

Things to Keep in Mind, Perennially

To enjoy your perennials more fully, keep these additional tips in mind. Dockery advises: Your plants will only be as good as your soil. Prepare it well and don't shy away from beneficial mulch and soil amendments ...

... unless your flowers need to breathe! Some perennials, like German Iris, need good air circulation especially around the roots.

Just because you like the look of a plant doesn't mean you can grow it anywhere. "It's easier (and more satisfying) to grow plants that already like your soil," says Dockery. (And your zone.)

Don't over-prune. Pruning can often wait till fall or winter. Birds can eat seeds and the plant can reseed itself. Exception: Remove dead or diseased parts of the plant.

But ... pruning can encourage some plants (like Silver Mount Artemisia and Yarrow) to bloom twice in one season ... if done properly and at the correct time.

Befriend native plants. Native perennials can survive just about any type of weather; they're more deeply rooted and have adapted to Mother Nature's whims.

Think mums are only for fall? That's when they tend to bloom, but if you plant them in spring--much earlier than is popular--the hardy mums will come back next season.