



Perennials are herbaceous plants that usually live a number of years. Their leaves and stems most often die down after a season's growth, but their roots persist. Next year, new growth will appear. While some perennials will have a bloom period of several months, as a rule, most bloom for only two or three weeks.

GROWING PERENNIALS

Probably the two most important considerations in growing perennials in Gloucester County are soil preparation and location—selecting the right site for a particular plant. These factors will influence the level of your success in the landscape.

Soil in Gloucester can range from dry and sandy (fast draining) to hard packed clay (moisture retaining). Some areas are buffeted by strong, cold winds from the adjoining water, and all of Gloucester County has hot, humid summers. Dry periods in the summer alternate with short, gully-washing storms that bring too much water all at once. Because there is often a layer of clay under sandy soil, the result can be water logging and resultant death to some perennials. In her book, *Time-Tested Plants: Thirty Years in a Four-Season Garden*, about gardening in Seaford (very similar to Gloucester County), Pamela Harper recommends planting in raised beds and using berms or banks to allow for better draining.

Basically, there are two approaches to growing perennials: (1) grow only the types of plants that like your soil conditions or (2) amend the soil to allow for more freedom of choice. The latter is the better way to go, but it requires work. Using a mixture of clay, sand, rock particles, and organic matter, you want to create a soil with a loamy, well-aerated consistency. The resulting soil will drain well and retain water

and nutrients in the root zone. With a large garden, you may choose to amend smaller areas, while leaving other areas as they are. When amending, dig at least one-foot deep and incorporate decomposable organic matter and coarse, washed sand. You must be careful when adding sand to clay soil as a small amount of sand added to the clay soil produces a cement-like mixture. Add sand to clay soil only when you can add at least one-quarter by volume. Organic matter such as compost is always a better additive.

Perennials can be planted in the fall or early spring; however, fall is the preferred time. In the fall, the ground is warm, a condition that allows roots to grow, and the weather is easy on the emergent foliage. In the spring, you will need to water frequently to support new growth. Whenever you plant, do not crowd your plants and water deeply, rather than too often, to encourage good root systems. Most perennials should be divided every three to five years.

Here are some hints for planting perennials.

- A landscaping principle is to plant in an odd number. Plant in clumps or groups (5 to 7 or more) for a show of color.
- Group plants requiring similar soil and watering conditions together.
- For a free-standing border, put tallest plants in the middle. With a fence or wall as background, plant the tallest in the rear.
- Try to include some winter interest foliage such as grasses.
- Label plants whose foliage disappears in the winter so you know where they are.
- Mulch in spring to keep in moisture. A loose covering of branches is good for winter protection.

FAVORITE PERENNIALS FOR GLOUCESTER

Perennial	Light/Soil/ Bloom Period	Description
Bee Balm <i>Monarda</i>	Full to part sun in moist soil. Blooms in summer.	Native. Attracts hummingbirds with lilac, red or pink flowers. May be invasive.
Black-eyed Susan <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Full sun to light shade in good soil. Blooms in late summer.	Native. Daisy-like yellow-gold flowers with purplish-brown center. Free seeding and short-lived.
Blanket Flower <i>Gaillardia x grandiflora</i>	Full sun in poor, sandy soil. Blooms from early summer to early fall.	Native. Short-lived with yellow, orange, red banding flowers. Deadheading lengthens bloom period.
Blue Phlox <i>Phlox divaricata</i>	Part shade in fertile soil. Blooms in early spring.	Native. Good groundcover with late blooming spring bulbs. Lavender or violet-blue flowers. Dormant in summer so mark location.
Byzantine Gladiolus <i>Gladiolus byzantinus</i>	Plant bulb in fall in average soil in full sun. Blooms in May-June.	Winter hardy. Blooms in late spring. Shorter than other glads, thus self-supporting. Brilliant magenta with white stripes.
Elephant Ears <i>Colocasias</i>	Full sun in well-drained, poor to average soil. Blooms in summer.	Most are perennials and will come back every summer. Some clump; other spread on runners along the ground. Choose clumpers to limit their spread. Come in varied sizes with heart-shaped leaves in black, purple, emerald green, chartreuse, yellow, or a mix of colors.
Gaura <i>Gaura lindheimeri</i> —white Often called ‘Whirling Butterflies’	Full sun in poor to average soil. Blooms May through October.	Drought resistant; good filler plant and is very graceful. It is a loose, bushy plant with flowers above the foliage on erect spikes. Self-seeds.
Hosta—Plantain Lily <i>Hosta</i>	Light shade in moist, fertile soil. Tolerates clay. Blooms in summer.	Good foliage plant; many varieties, sizes, and colors. Can be grown under black walnut trees. Deer do enjoy.
Johnny-Jump-Up <i>Viola tricolor</i>	Partial shade in fertile soil. Blooms spring to fall.	Vibrant flowers that are deep purple and yellow, creating a solid carpet of color for weeks. Self-sows freely.
Peony <i>Paeonia</i>	Full sun in rich, well-drained soil. Blooms in May.	Prefers slightly alkaline soil. Do not plant too deep. Long-lived and does not like to be moved. Colors from white, through pink to deep red.
Pincushion Flower <i>Scabiosa caucasica</i> ‘Clive Greaves’—lavender ‘Miss Willmont’—white	Full sun in well-drained, neutral to alkaline soil. Blooms late spring to early fall.	Flowers are blue, pink, and white. Deadhead to extend blooming period.

“Neither lupines nor foxgloves do well for me here (Ware Neck). In fact, they die before the end of the season and never return.

Sedums have perfect growing conditions in Gloucester—dry, hot summers. You can pretty much plant and ignore them, even in semi-shade.”

– Marguerite Supler, GEMG

“Epimedium is great for dry shade; Astilbe for moist shade. Mexican Sage, Salvia leucantha, blooms in the fall, and the cut flowers last a long time. Stokesia is sort of weedy, but lives. All Sedums are great perennials. Guara is great as a soft filler, and it will seed itself a bit.”

– Celeste Dudley, GEMG Emeritus

Favorite Perennials for Gloucester (*continued*)

Purple Coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> 'Kim's Knee High'	Full sun in sandy, well-drained soil. Blooms June to August.	Native. 30 inches tall. Summer blooming. Good cut flower. Draws butterflies. Dwarf 18-24 inches tall. Hybridization has produced many cultivars in many colors.
Sedum <i>Sedum spp.</i> 'Autumn Joy'	Full to part sun in average soil. Blooms August to November.	A medium-green succulent that remains pretty from spring through fall with seed heads in winter.
Shasta Daisy <i>Leucanthemum × superbum</i> 'Becky'	Full sun to light shade in average well-drained soil, Blooms in summer.	36-inch tall with large, white flowers with yellow centers. Withstands summer heat.
Tickseed <i>Coreopsis</i>	Full sun in poor to average soil. Blooms late spring until fall.	Flowers are bright yellow or rose. Many cultivars. Good cut flower.
Yarrow <i>Achillea</i>	Full sun in average soil. Requires excellent drainage. Blooms mid-summer into fall.	Flower colors include white, yellow, gold, pink and red. The aromatic foliage is green or gray. Drought resistant; good for drying.

"Soil preparation is the most important factor. That aside, daylilies do very well. So far they have not been nibbled by voles. Liriope is a joy with next to no maintenance. Native plants are best."

– Peggy Cooney, GEMG

Echinacea purpurea



PERENNIALS THAT CAN TAKE SUN ALL DAY

Perennial	Soil and Bloom Period	Description
Blue False Indigo <i>Baptisia australis</i>	Average, well-drained cool soil. Blooms late spring, early summer.	Native. Drought resistant. Very deep roots. Voles may be a problem.
Boltonia, white <i>Boltonia asteroides</i> 'Snow-bank'	Average, well-drained soil. Blooms in late summer and early fall.	Native. A 4- to 5-foot tall plant that has white aster-like flowers on blue-green foliage.
Butterfly Weed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Poor to average soil. Blooms in summer.	Native. Yellow or orange flowers. Attracts swallowtail and monarch butterflies. Poisonous.
Candytuft <i>Iberis sempervirens</i>	Well-drained soil. Blooms early spring to early summer.	Good border plant and ground cover that has small white flowers. Shear after bloom.
Chrysanthemum—Mum <i>Dendranthemum spp.</i>	Well-draining poor to average soil. Blooms in fall.	For larger blooms, pinch back until early July. Good cut flowers in a wide variety of colors.
Daylily <i>Hemerocallis</i>	Average soil with good drainage. Blooms in summer.	All colors except white and blue. Deadhead for neatness or select self-grooming varieties. Tetraploid plants with twice as many chromosomes are stronger and have larger flowers.

Perennials That Can Take Sun All Day (continued)

Perennial	Soil and Bloom Period	Description
Great Flowered Aster <i>Symphotrichum grandiflorum</i>	Average, well-drained soil. Blooms in the fall	Native. 30 inches tall with 2-inch blue flowers
Iris <i>germanica</i> (bearded) <i>insata</i> (Japanese) <i>tectorum</i> (roof) <i>siberica</i>	Check planting instructions carefully because different species have quite different soil preferences. Blooms in spring	Good cut flower in many colors Look for newer, reblooming bearded hybrids. Fall interest with decorative seed pods on Siberian iris
Joe-Pye Weed <i>Eupatorium purpureum</i>	Does best in moist soil, but can adapt to any soil. Blooms late summer to fall	Native. Grows to six feet and is good for back of border. Mauve flowers attract swallowtail butterflies.
Lantana (Hardy varieties) <i>Lantana camara</i> 'Miss Huff,' 'New Gold,' 'Mozelle,' and 'Pink Caprice'	Full sun and any well-drained soil Blooms May to frost	Attractive flowering plants that produce an abundance of nectar-rich flower clusters that are absolute butterfly, bee, and hummingbird magnets. Do not prune until early spring when new growth begins.
Pinks <i>Dianthus spp.</i>	Sandy, alkaline loamy soil. Blooms spring through summer	Use as a ground cover; mound-forming with fragrant pink flowers.
Red Hot Poker <i>Kniphofia</i>	Well-drained but not dry soil. Will tolerate clay soil. Blooms late spring, early summer	Arching clumps of evergreen foliage with spikes of long blooming yellow and orange flowers. Attracts butterflies, hummingbirds. Deer resistant
Salvia <i>S. guarantica</i> 'Black and Blue' <i>S. greggii</i> 'Wild Thing' <i>S. greggii</i> 'Maraschino'	Prefers moist, well-drained soil. Drought tolerant once established. Long blooming late spring through summer Blooms mid-summer to frost Blooms May to October May to November	Attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Deer resistant. 40 inches tall with 12-inch deep blue flower spikes 20 inches tall with hot pink flower spikes 30 inches tall with scarlet flowers
Sundrops <i>Oenothera fruticosa</i>	Average soil. Blooms in spring	Native. 18 inches tall with yellow flowers. Naturalizes well
Sunflower <i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	Average soil. Blooms July to frost	4-inch yellow flowers, some double. 36 inches tall. Clump forming. Divide often.
Wormwood <i>Artemesias,</i> 'Silver Mound,' 'Powis Castle'	Light, well-drained soil. Blooms in summer	Can be hang dried. Cut back in late spring. Can be invasive. A foliage plant with low cushion of ferny, silvery leaves and insignificant yellow flowers A bushy, woody-based perennial grown for its aromatic silvery foliage. It rarely flowers
Yarrow <i>Achillea</i>	Average soil. Blooms in summer	Flower colors include white, yellow, gold, pink and red. Can be hang dried and are good for fresh or dried arrangements.

PERENNIALS FOR SEMI-SHADE

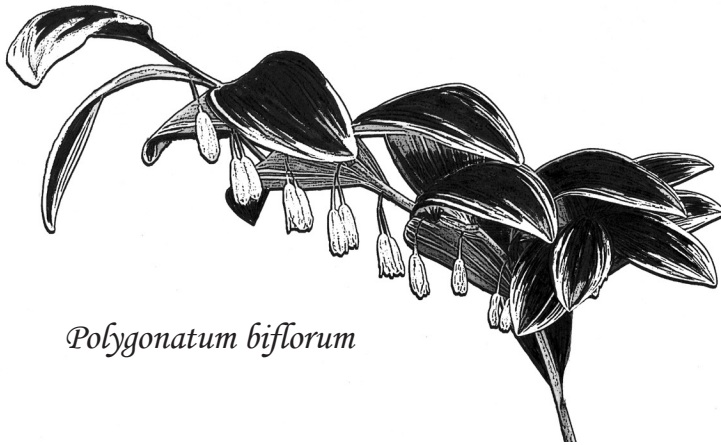
Perennial	Soil and Bloom Period	Description
Bluestar <i>Amsonia</i>	Moist, fertile soil. Blooms late spring to early summer.	Native. Powder blue flowers in star-shaped form. Golden foliage in fall.
Columbine <i>Aquilegia</i> 'Biedermeier' 'Double Pleat Blue' <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i>	Well-drained soil, drought tolerant. Blooms in spring.	Distinctive bell-shaped, spurred flowers are short-lived, lasting only two to three years. Self-seeds prolifically. With a wide choice of hybrid varieties, colors range from light pastels to bright yellow, red, orange and purple selections. Plant foliage has an attractive lacy appearance. 20 inches tall pastel shades. 24 inches tall with double violet-blue /white flowers. Native. Bicolor with red and yellow flowers.
False Dragonhead <i>Physostegia virginiana</i>	Moist, slightly acidic soil. Blooms mid-summer to mid-fall.	Native. Pink, lavender or white flowers. Can be aggressive.
Foxglove <i>Digitalis mertonensis</i>	Moist soil. Blooms in late spring.	True perennial if frequently divided. Rosy-pink flowers. Will re-flower if cut back. Start in the fall.
Japanese Anemone <i>Anemone japonica</i>	Moist soil. Blooms in late summer.	A very tall plant. Graceful rose to pink colored flower good for cuttings. Spreads easily.
Virginia Blue Bells <i>Mertensia</i>	Acidic, humus-rich soil. Blooms in spring and then becomes dormant.	Native. Pink buds open to small bell-shaped blue flowers. Good with ferns. Naturalizes well.

PERENNIALS FOR SHADE

Perennial	Soil and Bloom Period	Description
Chinese Astilbe <i>Astilbe chinensis</i>	Rich, moist soil. Blooms in summer.	Spiky pink to lavender flowers grace this plant. Fertilize in the spring. Divide every 3 years.
Coral Bells <i>Heuchera americana</i>	Rich organic, well-drained soil. Blooms in spring and summer.	Foliage plants. The native genus, <i>sanguinea</i> , does not do well in our heat and humidity.
Epimedium— Barrenwort—Bishop's Hat <i>Epimedium spp.</i>	Moist but well-drained, acid to neutral soil. Blooms mid-spring to late spring.	Good ground cover with flowers in soft colors of white, yellow, rose, and lavender. Because the foliage is long lasting, this plant always has something to display. Deer and rabbits will not eat.
False Solomon's Seal <i>Smilacina racemoso</i>	Moist, organically rich, acidic soil. Blooms in spring.	Until they bloom, you can seldom tell the real Solomon's seal from the False Solomon's seal. The latter produces dense, frothy clusters of white flowers at the ends of the stems and the blooms are followed by clusters of red berries, much different from the blue-black ones of Solomon's seal.

Perennials for Shade (continued)

Perennial	Soil and Bloom Period	Description
Ferns 'Autumn Brilliance' (<i>Dryopteris</i>) 'Ghost' (<i>Athyrium</i>) Japanese Painted (<i>Athyrium</i>)	Prefer adequate moisture and some organic matter in the soil. Ferns are at their best in spring, summer, and fall.	Great fillers, especially at edge of woods. 24 inches tall. Emerges orange, maturing to green/orange. 30 inches tall. Silver-green in spring, maturing to dark green. 18 inches tall with silvery weeping fronds.
Lenten Rose <i>Helleborus orientalis</i>	Deep, rich neutral or alkaline soil. Blooms in late winter-early spring.	Flowers are cup-shaped, nodding white to pink to rose-purple with yellow stamens. Poisonous. Good ground cover under shrubs
Lily of the Valley <i>Convallaria majalis</i>	Humus-rich soil. Blooms mid-spring to late spring.	Fragrant, dainty, white, bell-shaped flowers appear in spring. Good ground cover. Reproduces readily
Lungwort <i>Pulmonaria</i>	Cool, moist soil. Blooms in early spring.	The early spring blooming flowers resemble Virginia bluebells and can be red, white, blue or violet. Good ground cover. Superb under deciduous trees.
Solomon's Seal <i>Polygonatum biflorum</i>	Average to poor soil. Blooms in spring.	Elegant shade plant that has arching stems and dangling creamy bells. Easy to grow and will slowly colonize.



Polygonatum biflorum

ANNUALS THAT BEHAVE AS PERENNIALS

Because of our mild winters in Gloucester, many annuals will self-seed prolifically; others that are cut back in the fall or early spring will bloom again in the spring. Among these annuals are larkspur, dusty miller, snapdragons, the hardy varieties of lantana (especially trifolia), vinca, and impatiens. Amaryllis and gerbera daisy will winter over and re-bloom if planted in a sunny protected spot, perhaps next to a brick wall.

"Snapdragons will live through the winter here for many years. Penstemmons 'Huskers Red' also do well here."
 – Joy Long, GEMG



Antirrhinum majus

BIENNIALS

Although the life cycle for biennials is two years, you can keep them going every year by scattering the seeds of plants that have bloomed that year. Here are some of our favorite biennials:

- Hollyhock (*Althea rosea*) (requires full sun)
- Foxglove (*Digitalis*) (requires shade/semi-shade)
- Honesty, Money Plant (*Lunaria*) (requires semi-shade and is a great plant to dry)
- Sweet William (*Dianthus barbatus*) (requires full sun)

"I started my foxgloves from seeds and had wonderful results—big, healthy plants that came back for several years. Then, they were no more as they did not self-seed themselves."

– Noel Priseler, GEMG Emeritus

BULBS

The daffodil is important in the history of Gloucester County. When Gloucester was formed in 1651, the early settlers brought these soft reminders of English springs as they established themselves in the area. The soil and weather conditions were ideal for daffodils. The bulbs were passed from neighbor to neighbor and spread from the orderly beds and burying grounds of the great houses to the fields. By the beginning of the 1900's daffodils grew wild in the untended fields of Gloucester. It is from this abundance of natural beauty that grew the extensive daffodil industry, which earned the county the title "Daffodil Capital of America" in the 1930's and 40's. This heritage is celebrated each April with the Daffodil Festival.

Today there are more than 25,000 cultivars of daffodils and they can be purchased in 13 different divisions ranging from Trumpet to miniature blooms. Daffodils are planted in the fall for a spectacular spring showing. They are virtually pest proof, as the foliage and bulbs are poisonous to most insects and animals—including our pet cats and dogs as well as deer. Because of the climate in our Gloucester, it's possible to have daffodils flowering from November to May. Little if any division is needed for the bulbs.

"When choosing daffodil bulbs, you may want to choose one that is not a hybrid. Hybrids are not as faithful in coming back year after year. Ask for daffodils that naturalize. They will not only come back year after year but will also multiply."

– Sally Moore, Retired GEMG

Other favorite bulbs planted in the fall include tulips, alliums, anemones, camassias, crocus, crocosmia, fritillarias, iris, and muscari. These bulbs make great companions for the daffodils but may need protection from pests such as voles or squirrels. This may be accomplished by planting them underground in hardware cloth baskets or cages. Non-hardy gladiolus should be planted in early spring for a mid-summer blooming. Colchicum, fall crocus, *Lycoris radiata*, *Lycoris squamigera*, and *Sternbergia lutea* are a few of the bulbs you plant in the spring for a fall blooming. *Lycoris* and *Sternbergia*, like daffodils, are members of the amaryllis family and thus toxic to pets. The other bulbs will benefit from pest protection.

As a rule of thumb, plant bulbs at a depth three times the height of the bulb and space them three times the width of the bulb. To have a spectacular show, plant the bulbs in clusters. Bulbs do not require fertilizer when planted; however, established bulbs would benefit from a fall application of fertilizer. The general clean-up rule is: after the blooms have faded, wait until the foliage turns yellow before removing the foliage. This will give the bulbs the energy needed through photosynthesis to produce next year's bloom. The location of dormant bulbs can be marked with a golf tee or straw.

Daylilies are wonderful succession plants for spring bulbs because they hide the spent foliage. They also mark the location of the dormant bulbs.

Summer blooming bulbs are planted in early spring. Try alocasia, caladium, and *Zantedeschia* "calla lilies" in the shade and dahlia, canna and oxalis for a sunny location. These bulbs should be removed in the fall and stored in a cool dry location.

"In spring, when you're enjoying your daffodils, mark spots where you would like to put in more bulbs in the fall with plastic knives, forks, and spoons."

– Debbie Bartok-Newton, GEMG

PERENNIAL ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

Grasses create an informal and naturalistic environment that is often found in waterfront property and wetlands. They can also be combined with perennials in the mixed border. Some are evergreen; others have beautiful brown foliage in their dormant state.

Ornamental grasses produce a great volume of leaves and stems that must be cut back and cleaned up once a year. This is best done in late winter or very early spring before new growth begins.

Grass	Description	Comment
Blue Fescue—Blue Sheep's Fescue <i>Festuca ovina</i> 'Glauca'	This is a small cool-season grass that forms hedgehog-like mounds of fine-textured, pale, silvery-blue leaves. Grows 6 to 12 inches tall and wide in full sun or bright shade. Does not like damp spots. Evergreen foliage	Works well as an edging or ground cover or in rock gardens. Should be divided every 3 years.
Feather Grass—Needle Grass—Spear Grass <i>Stipa tenuissima</i>	Densely tufted with erect, narrowly linear to filament-like, tightly rolled, bright green 12-inch leaves. Throughout the summer bears narrow, nodding, softly feathery panicles. Light soil and dry weather suit it best. Evergreen foliage	The whole plant billows in the slightest breeze. This is short lived and treated as an annual, so when brown, lift out. It will be surrounded by baby tufts for the next year.
Feather Reed Grass <i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i> 'Stricta'	A stiffly, upright clump grass that changes with the seasons. In spring it is a fountain of light green leaves that by summer are topped with feathery pink inflorescences that change to light purple and ripen to golden wheat like sheaves in midsummer. In fall the leaves turn gold and stand during winter. Grows 4 to 7 feet tall, 2 to 3 feet wide. Best in full sun. Grows well in wet sites	This is one of the first grasses to bloom and is a handsome plant in any garden and a good screen when mass planted. Deer resistant
Fountain Grass <i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i>	Arching stalks of bottlebrush-like light pink or cream flower spikes appear in the late summer from dense, upright mounds of slender bright green leaves. Varieties grow from 1 to 4 feet tall. Grows in full sun in fertile, moist, well-drained soil. Good for wet sites. Evergreen foliage	Should be cut back in fall to avoid self sowing; however, can be cut back in late winter. Mulch well. Good when paired with Sedum 'Autumn Joy.' Deer resistant
Little Bluestem <i>Schizachyium scoparium</i> 'Prairie blues' 'The Blues'	3-foot tall silver blue dense clump of slender blades. Evergreen foliage 36 inches tall. Foliage turns orange and red in fall. Blue foliage with pink stems and bronze flowers	Native. Should be divided every third year. Deer resistant
Miscanthus—Maiden Grass <i>Miscanthus sinensis</i> 'Hinjo' 'Morning Light'	Miscanthus species are big grasses with broad, gracefully arching leaves. Grows well in wet sites. 4 feet tall and gold banded. Elegant, 4- to 5-foot tall carefree grass.	Thrives in heat and humidity. Deer resistant. A favorite of locals; it is the variety on Rt. 17 in York County.

Perennial Ornamental Grasses (*continued*)

Grass	Description	Comment
Muhly Grass <i>Muhlenbergia capillaries</i>	A clump-forming grass that grows 1 to 3 feet tall and 2 to 3 feet wide and is noted for its attractive summer foliage and spectacular clouds of vibrant pink, airy flowers in the fall. Prefers sandy soil and a sunny to lightly shaded location.	Native. Deer resistant. Withstands heat, humidity, drought, and poor soil.
Pampas Grass <i>Cortaderia</i>	A large, fast-growing plant that produces dense, impenetrable, 4- to 5-foot wide evergreen fountains of saw-toothed, narrow, arching leaves. In late summer plumes of cream to pink flowers soar on long stems that can reach 6 feet or more. Full sun to partial shade in well-drained soil. Evergreen foliage.	Because of its huge size, plant this grass in a spot where you need a big, impressive accent and surround with mass plantings to balance its striking vertical flow.
Rush <i>Juncus effusus</i>	2 to 3 feet tall, flexible, and steel gray. Sun to light shade in moderately moist to wet soil. Evergreen foliage.	Native. Good bog plant
Sedges <i>Carex</i> spp. ' <i>Marginatum</i> '	A dense arching mound of stiff wide leaves that thrives in shade in average to fertile, moist but well-drained soil. Grows 12 to 18 inches tall and 2 to 3 feet wide. Evergreen foliage.	While sedges look very much like grasses, they're actually only distant relatives. Flower stalks of grasses are round; sedges have triangular stems. Remember, sedges have edges.
Sweet Flag <i>Acorus gramineus</i> ' <i>Ogon</i> '	Narrow, grass-like, arching leaves in dense clumps. The leaves have bright yellow stripes on chartreuse, 8- to 10-inch tall foliage. Full sun to partial shade in fertile, moist or wet soil. Grows in average garden soil or wet sites. Evergreen foliage.	Slow growing ground cover that almost seems to glow. Suitable for planting at pond's edge, directly in the shallow water, or in other moist locations.
Switchgrass <i>Panicum virgatum</i> <i>'Shenandoah</i> ' <i>'Dallas Blues</i> ' <i>'Heavy Metal</i> '	Dense upright clumps of narrow leaves that change color with the seasons. 36 inches tall and wide. Leaves turn maroon in fall. 5 feet tall with wide bluish blades and plumes 4 feet tall with metallic blue leaves that turn yellow in fall	Native. Does well in coastal areas as withstands sandy soil, drought, and salt spray. Does best in full sun. Good erosion control plant. Deer resistant.

"When pruning back pampas grass, use an electric hedge trimmer. Have a tarp lying alongside and put cuttings right on the tarp. Gather tarp and haul to the dump in the tarp. This saves picking up pieces all over the yard."

– Betty Durette, GEMG

PROTECTION AGAINST VOLES

Voles are a problem in Gloucester. Using the tunnels made by moles, voles move through the soil and feed on roots and stems of plants. It is the recommendation of the Virginia Cooperative Extension that voles be trapped with a mousetrap baited with apple and peanut butter on the underside of the bait holder. Put the trap next to the vole hole and cover with a flowerpot or basin topped with a brick. Be patient; it may take time, but usually in three days, you will have trapped the vole. You might also trap a second or third vole by rebaiting the trap and leaving outside the same hole and following the same procedure.

The following are some tips for outsmarting the voles from Gloucester Master Gardeners—or at least living with them.

- Plant most precious perennials in big plastic pots with drainage holes; submerge these pots in soil. Put chicken wire or hardware cloth over the tops of pots. This is also good for tulips and other enticing bulbs.
- Plant tulips, other delicate bulbs, and fleshy rooted plants favored by voles and squirrels in wire cages made from hardware cloth.
- Surround and underline plants and bulbs with sharp gravel or kitty litter (fresh or used).
- Narcissus and other members of the amaryllis family are poisonous to critters and you do not need to protect them; however, you can surround those bulbs you need to protect with bulbs from the amaryllis family as a means of keeping the critters at bay.

“Nylon fishing line coiled into a nest in the bottom of a planting hole has protected hostas in my yard from voles for four years. I plan to wrap tulip bulbs with line this fall.”

—Ruth White, GEMG

“Plant bulbs in plastic containers to deter voles. The containers last about three years.”

—Teresa Denby, GEMG

“A way to plant your hostas to prevent them from being eaten by voles is to use pots and sharp gravel! First find a pot one size larger than your hosta is currently in, cut out the bottom. Then dig your hole and put the new pot in this hole with the top of the pot at ground level. Next you put a layer of small, sharp gravel in the bottom. Then comes your hosta with your mix and you top with another layer of sharp gravel. When you finish this layering, mulch like normal. This may also work for other plants that voles may like.”

— Jim Brant, GEMG

DÉCOR TIPS

Here are some fun things to do with perennials:

Pots et Fleurs (potted flowers and cut flowers combined)

During January and February—when the winter doldrums strike—buy blooming plants, such as calla lilies, daffodils, hyacinths, crocuses, oriental lilies, and hydrangeas, which can later be put in the garden. You may enjoy these as they are, or you can create “Pots et Fleurs” creatively to make a beautiful arrangement.

1. Buy some small trailing ivies and blooming plants. Select a basket or decorative planter that is leak proof. Place the pots of flowers in the container with the ivies trailing over the sides.
2. Hint: Sometimes it works better--you can fit and angle better--if you remove some of the plants from the pots and put each plant in a small plastic bag.
3. Insert some cut flowers that have been placed in small skinny jars filled with water, blocks of wet oasis in plastic bags, or water tubes.
4. Arrange in a pleasing layout. Cover bare spots with sphagnum moss that has been wetted and squeezed.

Bulbs in Containers

Along about November, try the Triple Decker or Lasagna approach to planting bulbs in a container. This will give you a beautiful long-blooming display come February.

1. Pick a large, deep pot with good drainage.
2. Plant a layer of tall-growing bulbs, such as daffodils, 10 inches deep in the container. It's okay for the bulbs to touch each other.
3. Cover with 2 to 3 inches of soil.
4. Plant a layer of tulips and cover with soil.
5. Add a layer of small bulbs such as crocuses or grape hyacinths and cover with 4 to 5 inches of soil.
6. Top with an inch of mulch and/or plant pansies for a winter flower display.
7. Water well and place in a sunny spot.

Obtaining Perennials

1. Buy compact plants with healthy green leaves at garden centers. Avoid root-bound plants or those that have been allowed to dry out.
2. When buying plants at stores other than garden centers, purchase them early in the season because most of these stores are ill-equipped to maintain healthy plants for any length of time.
3. Plants grown by Gloucester Master Gardeners are sold at the Plant Extravaganza held annually on a Saturday in early September. Master Gardeners in near-by counties have plant sales at various times in the fall and spring.

REFERENCES

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- Bender, S. (Ed.). (2015). *The New Southern Living Garden Book: The Ultimate Guide to Gardening*. Birmingham, AL: Oxmoor House.
- Damrosch, B. *The garden primer*. (2008.) New York, NY: Workman Publishing.
- Harper, P. J. (2000). *Time-tested plants: Thirty years in a four-season garden*. Portland, OR: Timber Press.
- Hodgson, L. (2003). *Perennials for every purpose: Choose the right plants for your conditions, your garden, and your taste*. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Press.
- Orband, J. (2000). *Common plants of the Peninsula*. Yorktown, VA: Virginia Cooperative Extension.

Below is a list of Virginia Cooperative Extension publications that address discussion points in this chapter. The websites where these can be found are <https://Resources.ext.vt.edu> or <https://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu>. (Type in the publication number [e.g. 456-018] in the search box.)

Daylilies in Virginia, 426-030

Flowering Bulbs: Culture and Maintenance, 426-201

Perennials: Culture, Maintenance and Propagation, 426-203

Planning the Flower Border, 426-202

