

# Perennials: How to Choose, Plant, and Maintain for Year Round Flowers

Lisa Graff  
OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer

March 29, 2025



Oregon State University  
Extension Service

# Washington County Master Gardener Association



Photo: S.Albright

- In support of and in collaboration with the OSU Extension Service Master Gardener™ Program
- Volunteer to educate the public about sustainable and affordable gardening by providing relevant, research-based education.
- <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg>

# Washington County Master Gardener™ Association

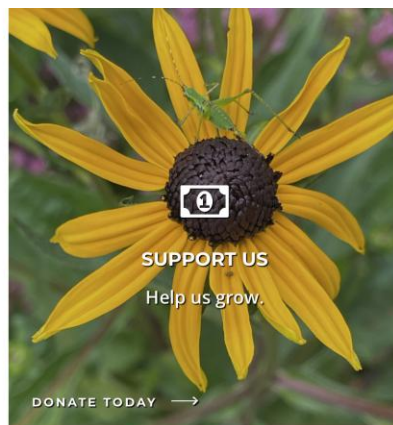
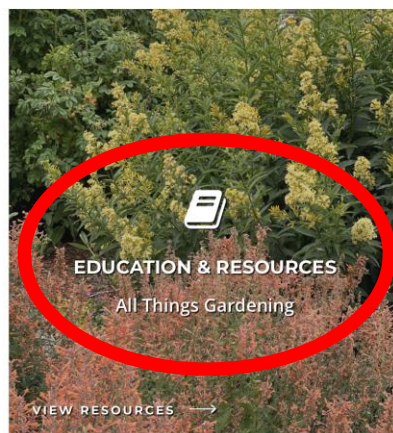


## *Handy card*

### EDUCATION & RESOURCES

page on our website

- Link to resources from our classes
- Monthly Chapter Speaker recordings
- Helpful links from OSU, Metro and more!



Public Events



website

[www.washingtoncountymastergardeners.org](http://www.washingtoncountymastergardeners.org)



in cooperation with  
Oregon State University  
Extension Service



# Topics

- What are Perennials?
  - Perennials, Annuals, Biennials
- Planting for Success
  - Zone (Temp), Soil, Light, Water, Nutrients, Mulch
- Maintenance
  - How to get more blooms
  - Dealing with problems – pests, weeds, winter
- Perennial Combinations
- Great varieties of long-blooming perennials



# Perennial Passion ...for over 20 years



Copyright: Lisa Graff

**2002**

**2022**







# What are Perennials ?

- Annuals

Annual plants live for just one season. Typically produce abundance of showy blooms before they die.

- Marigolds, Petunias... but also some Salvias, some Geraniums...

- Biennials

Biennials live for two years. The first year they produce stems and leaves, then bloom the second year.

- Foxglove, Sweet William

- Perennials

Perennial plants, live three or more years. Often with the first flowering cycle during the second year. Short-lived kinds do well for just a few years whereas long-lived types may last for decades.



Copyright: Lisa Graff



# Ingredients for Success



- Flour
- Water
- Salt
- Yeast



- Temperature
- Soil
- Light
- Water
- Nutrients
- Mulch



# Planting for Success

- **Temperature**
  - Zone – 8 (10-20 degrees)
- **Soil – Clay? Amend, amend, amen(d)**
  - With what? Organic matter (garden compost)
  - New beds: 4" of garden compost, mixed to 12"
  - Existing beds: 1-2" of compost every year or two
- **Light – Right plant, Right place**
  - Sun: 6 or more hours of sun
  - Part shade: 4-6 hours of sun
  - Shade: Less than 4 hours of sun
- **Water – Dry, average, moist?**
  - Even drought tolerant plants need watering
    - To get established
    - Then less frequently



## Food & a Blanket

- **Nutrients - Fertilizer**
  - What's needed? Soil test will tell you
- **Mulch**
  - 2" of compost, wood chips, or bark on top of soil
  - Retain moisture, prevent weeds

# Where to get Plant info?

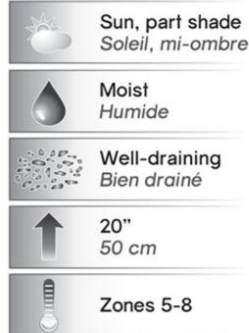
Tags, MBG, Bench Cards

**Tip:** Want flowers in shady garden – look for ‘part shade’



Violet-blue flowers from spring to fall. Vigorous clumps of green dentate leaves with pale marbling turn red in fall. Perennial Plant of the Year 2008.

*Fleurs violet-bleu du printemps jusqu'à l'automne. Taille vigoureuse de feuilles dentées vertes avec des marbrures pâles qui deviennent rouges en automne. Vivace de l'année 2008.*



Propagation Prohibited  
Multiplication interdite

Printed in Canada  
Imprimé au Canada

Bellwyck  
horticulture



447

Home Support the Garden Members Shop Volunteer Jobs Media Contact

MISSOURI BOTANICAL GARDEN

Visit Things To Do Learn & Discover Gardens & Gardening Sustainability Plant Conservation Plant Science About

Gardens & Gardening > Your Garden > Plant Finder


## Gardening Help

Plant Finder  
Lawn, Landscape & Garden Design  
Edible Gardening  
Advice, Tips & Resources  
Plants of Merit  
Sustainable Gardening  
Gardening Education & Classes  
Visit the Center for Home Gardening  
Gardening Help Site Map

### Geranium 'Gerwat' ROZANNE

Like Plant Finder? Ensure its ongoing development with your support. [Donate Now](#)

[Back to Previous Page](#)



Common Name: cranesbill  
Type: Herbaceous perennial  
Family: Geraniaceae  
Zone: 5 to 8  
Height: 1.00 to 1.50 feet  
Spread: 1.00 to 2.00 feet  
Bloom Time: May to July  
Bloom Description: Violet blue with white centers  
Sun: Full sun to part shade  
Water: Medium  
Maintenance: Low  
Flower: Showy  
Attracts: Butterflies  
Tolerate: Rabbit, Deer  
[Garden locations](#)

[More Images](#)  
[Plant of Merit](#)

### Culture

Easily grown in average, medium moisture, well-drained soils in full sun to part shade. Prefers moist, organic soils. Established plants have some drought tolerance. Plants prefer some part afternoon shade in the St. Louis area. In hot summer climates, the primary bloom runs from late spring to early summer (June - July) with a lighter bloom continuing throughout summer into fall. If bloom interrupts in the heat of the summer, plants can be cut back to rejuvenate, shape and/or encourage a late summer/early fall rebloom. In cooler northern climates, plants usually bloom well throughout summer into fall. Side stems may be removed or trimmed at any time to control spread.

ROZANNE has exceptional heat tolerance, and generally will bloom throughout the summer.

### Noteworthy Characteristics

*Geranium* is a genus of about 300 species of annuals and herbaceous perennials from temperate regions. Many make excellent garden plants and many hybrids have been made.

Genus name comes from the Greek word *geranos* meaning crane in reference to the fruit which purportedly resembles the head and beak of a crane.

ROZANNE is a patented hybrid clump-forming geranium that typically grows in a mound to 20" tall by 24" wide. It is noted for its almost non-stop flowering throughout the growing season. Large, 5-petaled, violet-blue flowers (to 2.5" diameter) with purple-violet veins and small white centers bloom profusely from late spring to early summer, generally with continued flowering to fall in the St. Louis climate. Deeply cut, slightly marbled, deep green foliage. U.S. Plant Patent PP12,175 issued October 30, 2001. Synonymous with *Geranium* 'Jolly Bee'.

### Problems

No serious insect or disease problems. Some susceptibility to leaf spots and rusts.

### Uses

Rock gardens, cottage gardens or borders. Mass for ground cover. Containers.

  
**LUX PERENNIALS NURSERY**  
Bountiful Blooms, Dazzling Colors, Unique Varieties



## Geranium 'Rozanne'

- Masses of purple flowers
- SUPER long blooming from May - frost !
- Sun/Part Shade, Zone 5, Height 1.5' and Width 2'

Award winning, 'Rozanne' is one of the longest blooming perennials in the garden. Not the same as annual geranium. Easy to grow. Non-stop purple flowers with no dead-heading. A gorgeous companion to roses, dahlias, flowering shrubs. Average water.

Agastache Blue Fortune

Dahlia Intrigue Tiger Lily

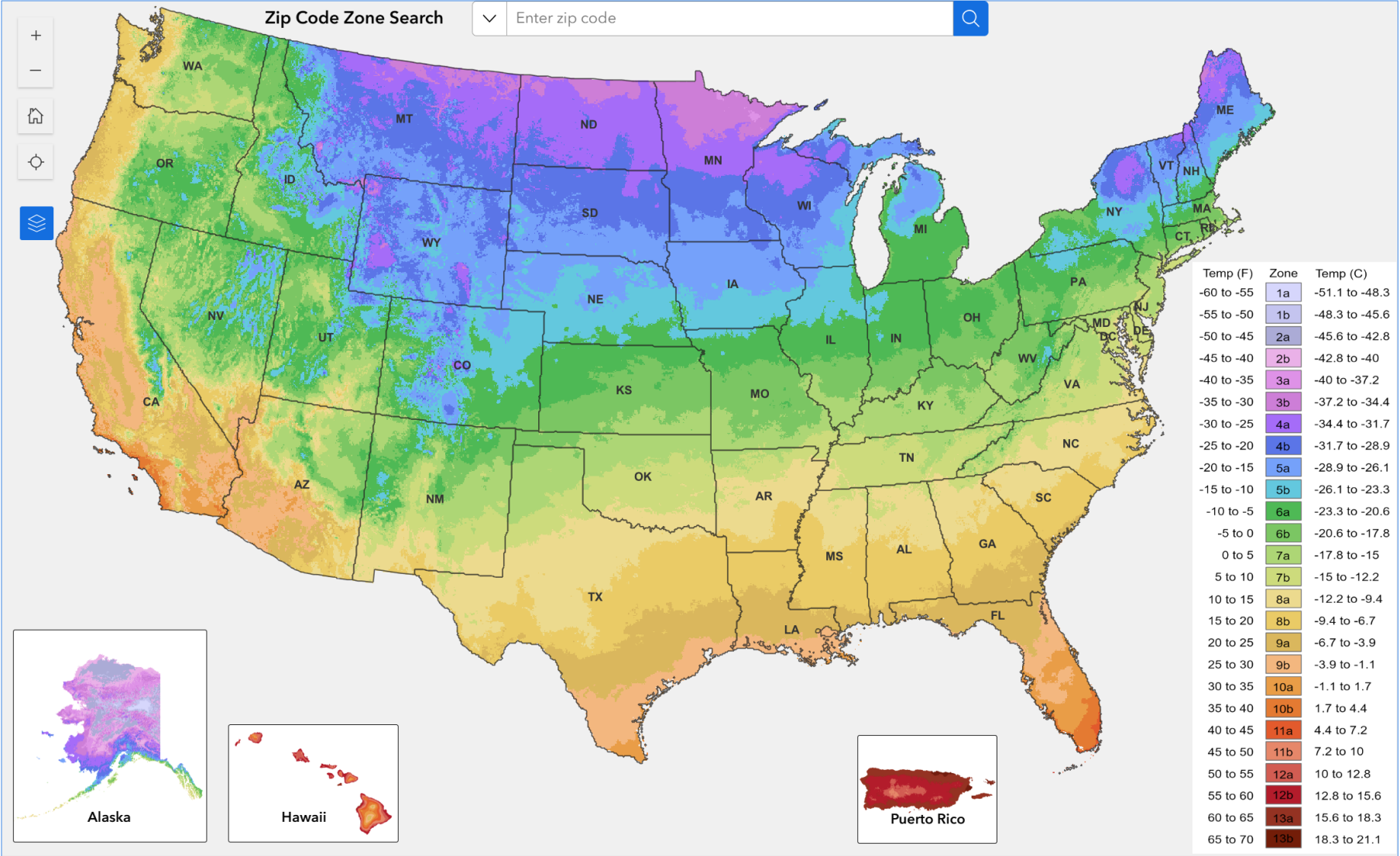


Copyright: Lisa Graff

Geranium  
Rozanne



# 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map





# USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

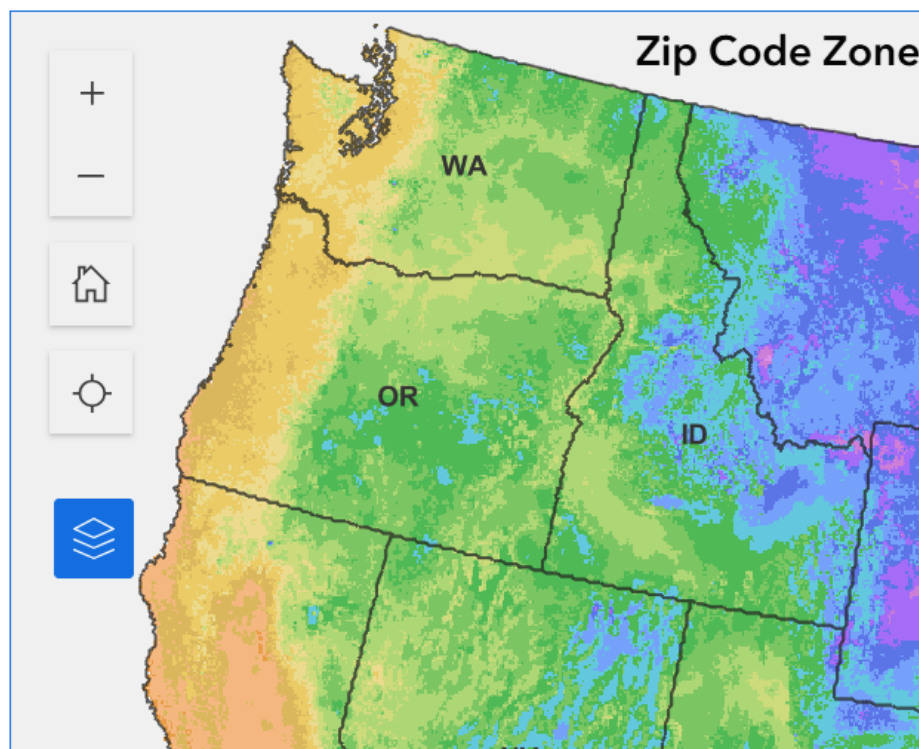
Home

How to Use the Maps

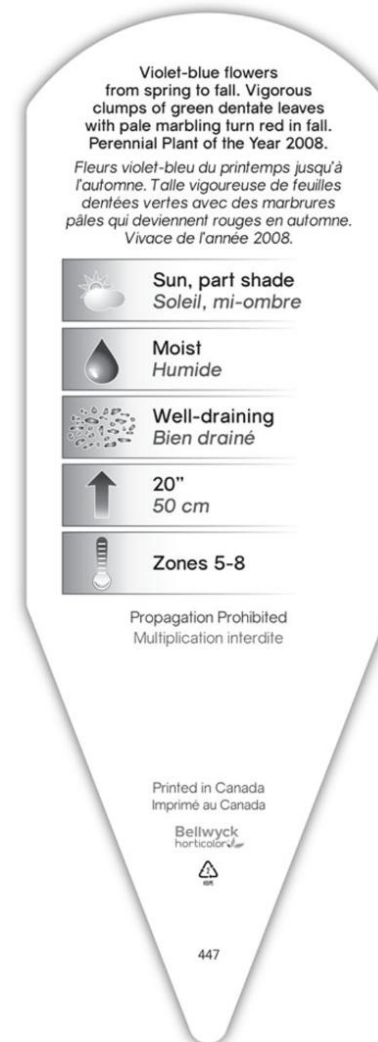
Map Downloads

Ma

## 2023 USDA Plant



Temp (F)	Zone	Temp (C)
-60 to -55	1a	-51.1 to -48.3
-55 to -50	1b	-48.3 to -45.6
-50 to -45	2a	-45.6 to -42.8
-45 to -40	2b	-42.8 to -40
-40 to -35	3a	-40 to -37.2
-35 to -30	3b	-37.2 to -34.4
-30 to -25	4a	-34.4 to -31.7
-25 to -20	4b	-31.7 to -28.9
-20 to -15	5a	-28.9 to -26.1
-15 to -10	5b	-26.1 to -23.3
-10 to -5	6a	-23.3 to -20.6
-5 to 0	6b	-20.6 to -17.8
0 to 5	7a	-17.8 to -15
5 to 10	7b	-15 to -12.2
10 to 15	8a	-12.2 to -9.4
15 to 20	8b	-9.4 to -6.7
20 to 25	9a	-6.7 to -3.9
25 to 30	9b	-3.9 to -1.1
30 to 35	10a	-1.1 to 1.7
35 to 40	10b	1.7 to 4.4
40 to 45	11a	4.4 to 7.2
45 to 50	11b	7.2 to 10
50 to 55	12a	10 to 12.8
55 to 60	12b	12.8 to 15.6
60 to 65	13a	15.6 to 18.3
65 to 70	13b	18.3 to 21.1





# Soil Prep

## *Important and Impactful*

May 26, 2020



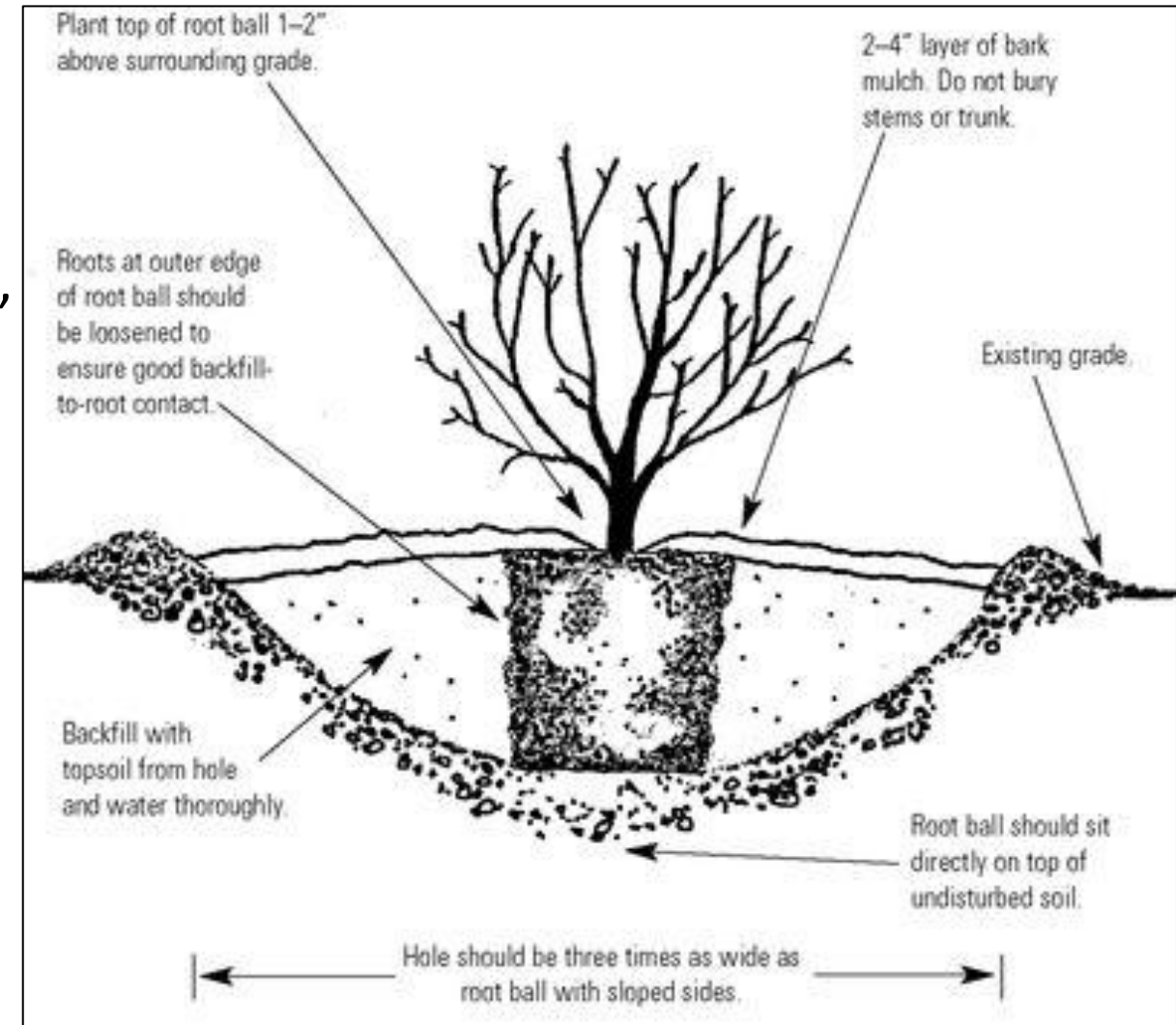
How long to grow to this?





# Planting

1. Dig a hole twice as wide as the pot and same depth – why?
2. Drainage - Well-draining soil always important, sometimes a must
  - Mixing in compost helps a lot – 25%+
  - Can also mix in some gravel (1/4" 10, "clean")
  - For plants that must have good drainage – mix in 25% gravel, 25% compost, 50% original/native soil
3. Plant should be well watered *before* being planted and after – esp summer
4. Loosen the roots – or cut if root-bound
5. Backfill: 25% garden compost + 75% native soil.
  - Mix in fertilizer and firm the soil around the plant
  - Add 2-4" of mulch on top



# Feeding & Watering Perennials

20-20-20  
Synthetic

- N-P-K: Nitrogen – Phosphorus – Potassium
  - Plus 'micro-nutrients'
  - Our local soil tends to have plenty of P (Phosphorus)
  - I use a 15-4-8 fertilizer
- Individual plants: How often and when?
  - Slow release vs liquid feed
- Water?
  - Deeply and Infrequently
  - Plant roots need water and **AIR** – don't drown them



3-9-4  
Organic

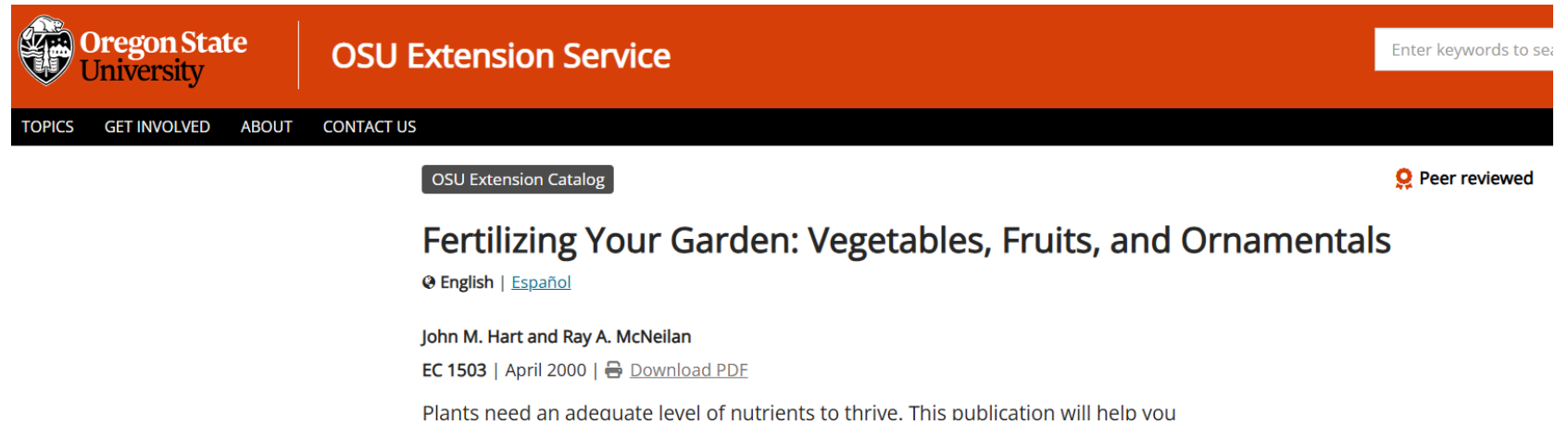
# Slow Release Fertilizer



Food Plus Outdoor & Indoor, 15-9-12	
GUARANTEED ANALYSIS	
Total Nitrogen (N) <sup>1</sup> .....	15%
8.4% Ammoniacal Nitrogen	
6.6% Nitrate Nitrogen	
Available Phosphate (P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ) <sup>1</sup> .....	9%
Soluble Potash (K <sub>2</sub> O) <sup>1</sup> .....	12%
Magnesium (Mg) <sup>1</sup> .....	1.3%
0.9% Water Soluble Magnesium (Mg)	
Sulfur (S) <sup>1</sup> .....	6.0%
6.0% Combined Sulfur (S)	
Boron (B) <sup>1</sup> .....	0.02%
Copper (Cu) .....	0.05%
0.05% Water Soluble Copper (Cu)	
Iron (Fe) <sup>1</sup> .....	0.46%
0.09% Water Soluble Iron (Fe)	
0.006% Chelated Iron (Fe)	
Manganese (Mn) <sup>1</sup> .....	0.06%
0.02% Water Soluble Manganese (Mn)	
Molybdenum (Mo) <sup>1</sup> .....	0.02%
Zinc (Zn) <sup>1</sup> .....	0.05%
0.011% Water Soluble Zinc (Zn)	
Derived from: Polymer-Coated Ammonium Nitrate, Ammonium Phosphate, Potassium Sulfate, Magnesium Sulfate, Sodium Borate, Iron Sulfate, Iron EDTA, Manganese Phosphate, Manganese Sulfate, Sodium Molybdate, Zinc Sulfate, Copper Sulfate and Zinc Oxide.	
<sup>1</sup> The Nitrogen, Phosphate, Potash, Magnesium, Sulfur, Boron, Iron, Manganese, Molybdenum, and	



# Synthetic or Organic Fertilizer?



The screenshot shows the header of the Oregon State University Extension Service website. The header is orange with the OSU logo and name on the left, and 'OSU Extension Service' in the center. A search bar is on the right. Below the header is a black navigation bar with links: TOPICS, GET INVOLVED, ABOUT, and CONTACT US. The main content area has a dark orange background. It features a 'Fertilizing Your Garden: Vegetables, Fruits, and Ornamentals' title, a language selector (English | Español), the authors (John M. Hart and Ray A. McNeilan), the publication code (EC 1503) and date (April 2000), a 'Download PDF' button, and a 'Peer reviewed' badge. A brief introductory sentence is at the bottom: 'Plants need an adequate level of nutrients to thrive. This publication will help you'.

Oregon State University | OSU Extension Service

Enter keywords to search

TOPICS GET INVOLVED ABOUT CONTACT US

OSU Extension Catalog

Peer reviewed

## Fertilizing Your Garden: Vegetables, Fruits, and Ornamentals

English | Español

John M. Hart and Ray A. McNeilan

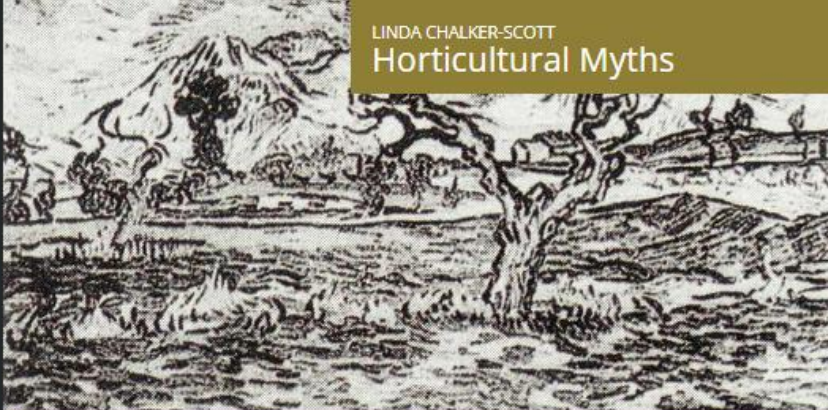
EC 1503 | April 2000 | [Download PDF](#)

Plants need an adequate level of nutrients to thrive. This publication will help you

## Types of fertilizer

Opinions vary concerning the merits of manures or other organic fertilizers versus "chemical" fertilizers. Excellent gardens may be grown using either method. **Plants do not differentiate between nutrients from organic and chemical fertilizers; the form absorbed by plant roots from both sources is identical.**

Plants can use chemical fertilizers as soon as they are applied. Soil bacteria and fungi must act on most organic nutrient sources to change them into a usable form. Thus, if you use mostly organic fertilizers, you may need to add a small amount of a source of more readily available nitrogen early in the season to ensure adequate plant nutrition until the organic sources become available to plants. Options include liquid fish, blood meal and chemical fertilizer.



## You can help!

Whether it's just a cup of coffee or something more,  
your contribution can help to support high quality,  
*science-based* gardening information.

DONATE

## Horticultural Myths

Looking for the newest myth-information? Check out our blog [The Garden Professors](#). You'll find science-based information from four horticultural professors from around the country.

### Fertilizers

[The Myth of Beneficial Bone Meal \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Vitamin Shots \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Foliar Feeding \(pdf\)](#)

#### Phosphate

[The Myth of Phosphate Fertilizer \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Phosphate Part II \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Red Leaves \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Curative Kelp \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Antitranspirants \(pdf\)](#)

### How Plants Work

[The Color Conundrum \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Mineral Magic \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Xeriscaping \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Well-Behaved Ornamentals \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Wilting Leaves \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Night Light \(pdf\)](#)

[Mycorrhizae: So, What the Heck Are They,  
Anyway? \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Uniform Plant Performance \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Stoic Trees \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Tree Topping Part II \(pdf\)](#)

### Maintaining Trees and Shrubs

[The Myth of Chloroxed Clippers \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Winter Watering \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Native Plant Superiority \(pdf\)](#)

[The Myth of Plant Quality \(pdf\)](#)

### Mulches

[The Myth of Pretty Mulch \(pdf\)](#)

[Myths, Miracles or Marketing? Dust Mulches  
\(pdf\) \(References\)](#)

[The Myth of Landscape Fabric \(pdf\)](#)



# Perennial Maintenance Tips - Pruning

*Maximize bloom time and quantity*

- Some perennials bloom a LONG time – 3, 4, 6 months!
  - IF you ‘deadhead’
- Deadhead
  - Cut spent flowers off to keep blooms coming
- Evergreen perennials
  - Trim in ~March to remove “ratty” foliage



**Geum Totally Tangerine**

“Ratty”

Jan/Feb



**Geum Totally Tangerine**

Beautiful & covered in buds

April



# Jupiter's Beard – Blooms 5 Months ... If....

Mid Jul



May - Oct





# Perennial Maintenance Tips - Problems

- Know your enemy - if you don't, ask a Master Gardener
  - What do yellow or wilted leaves mean?
    - Too much water
    - Too little water
    - Disease
    - Nutrient problem
    - Something else... !
- Target the least invasive solution to the pest you have
  - No need to 'just spray everything'
  - Aphids – Spray off with water
  - Slugs – Use beer traps, squash them, or targeted slug bait
  - Let the good bugs do their job – ladybugs, etc
  - Tolerate a few holes
  - Keep the plants healthy
  - Plant choice
- For weeds – mulch is your best friend
  - Plant densely





# Perennial Maintenance Tips

*Maximize bloom time and quantity*

- Winter - My biggest concern in the garden – winter wet soil
- Best solutions:
  - Compost mixed in the soil with mulch on top
  - Know the low spots, right plant, right place
  - Don't prune most perennials until spring, ~March
- For plants that need very good drainage... a few tips
  - Some plants extra sensitive to wet:
    - Dahlia, Penstemon, Agastache, Wallflower, Salvia
  - Add ¼" 10 (clean) gravel to planting hole
    - 25% gravel, 25% compost. 50% native soil
  - Mulch around the plant with 3" of ¼" 10 gravel



Penstemon – Mid Dec



Penstemon - Jan



Sleeping Dahlia –  
ready for winter



# Perennial Combinations

- Objective
  - Love of plants?
  - Cutting garden?
  - Easy maintenance?
  - Pollinator garden?
  - Drought tolerant?
  - Native plants?
- What do you love?
  - Which plants?
  - What colors?



Agastache/ Hummingbird Mint  
'Blue Fortune'



Penstemon/ Beardtongue 'Ruby'



Dahlia 'Coral Gypsy'



Dianthus/ Sweet William  
'Sooty'



Eremurus/ Foxtail Lily 'Cleopatra'



# Where to Start ?

Overwhelming ?

Start with 1 or 2 favorite flowers

Add another, take a look, make changes

Like making a bouquet





# Choosing & Placing Perennials

1. Long-Blooming
2. Bloom Timing
3. Massing (3-7+)
4. Repetition



## Look at the tag

- Light, soil, water requirements
- Size & Bloom time





# Choosing & Placing Perennials



## Example: Geraniums

- Over 400 varieties
- Annuals and Perennials
- Bloom times vary: 1 month – 5 months



## Example: Geum

- Over 80 varieties
- Some Evergreen, some Deciduous
- Bloom times vary: 2 month – 6 months

Naming note:

Red Maple Franksred

*Genus species* 'Variety or Cultivar'

*Acer rubrum* 'Franksred'

# "A Rose is a Rose is a Rose"

Well.....Not Really.... Choose your Cultivar/ Variety Carefully



# Perennial Combinations - Considerations

## Overall Structure

- Hardscape, trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, lawn...
- Varying heights, shapes, undulating
- Massing plants

## Plants

- Color – hot, cool, light, dark...
- Texture – shape, tactile
- Form – Mounding, vase-shaped, columnar...

## Flowers

1. Round flower: Peony, Allium, Rose, Hydrangea, Dahlia
2. Vertical spire flower: Nepeta, Agastache, Salvia
3. Small cupped or daisy-shaped flower: Geum, Geranium, Rudbeckia, Aster
4. Tubular flower: Phytolipsis, Penstemon, Fuchsia
5. Other contrasting shapes (clusters, lilies): Centranthus, Dianthus, Daylily, Yarrow



Copyright: Lisa Graff



# Spring !

**Geum Totally Tangerine**

Evergreen Apr-Oct

**Wallflower** - Erysimum Bowles Mauve

Evergreen Apr-Oct

**Centranthus Ruber**

May – Oct



**Bloom Early  
Bloom Long  
Color Density**





# May

Rhodies

Massed:

Wallflower Bowles Mauve

Dianthus Sooty

Centranthus Ruber Pretty Betsy

Geranium Rozanne

Bearded Iris purple - rebloomer

Accents:

Calla Lily white

Pink oriental poppy – Princess Victoria Louise



Copyright: Lisa Graff





MAY

Wisteria  
Bearded Iris  
Foxglove  
Geum  
Allium





MAY

Allium

Iris

Rheum



# May/ June

Repetition & Mass

Using the same plants in various beds & repeating shapes & colors

Dianthus Sooty, Centranthus PB,  
Geranium Rozanne



Loosestrife  
Beaujolias  
May-Sept



Copyright: Lisa Graff



Mallow  
Zebrina  
Jun-Sept



Copyright: Lisa Graff

Yarrow  
Raspberry –  
Jun-Oct



# July / August

Agastache Blue Fortune Jul-Sept

Geranium Rozanne May - Oct

Dahlia Intrigue July-Oct

Tiger Lily Jul/Aug

Lavatera Pink Jun-Sept

Wallflower Bowles Mauve Apr-Oct



Copyright: Lisa Graff



Copyright: Lisa Graff







# July / Aug

Dahlia Coral Gypsy

Penstemon Ruby - Jun-Oct

Alstroemeria Apricot - Jun-Sept

Dahlia Holly Hill Black Beauty

Delphinium Black Knight (rebloom)

Roses













# Aug/ Sept



Rudbeckia Cherry Brandy



Flag Lily Crimson – Blooms Sept to Nov



Aster Purple Dome



Peruvian Lily Peachy Orange – May - Oct  
Salvia Amistad – Jun/Jul - Oct



October



Copyright: Lisa Graff

November



Copyright: Lisa Graff



# Burgundy - depth & drama



Pineapple Lily  
*Eucomis*  
'Sparkling  
Burgundy'



*Calycanthus* 'Aphrodite'

Large shrub  
Fast growing  
Long-bloomer: May - July

*Hydrangea* 'Everlasting Crimson'

- Jun-Oct+
- Starts hot pink
- Matures to burgundy





# Exotic or unusual...



*Rheum*



*Rehmannia* (Chinese Foxglove)



*Echium* 'Red Feathers'



*Melianthus Major*



# Long-Blooming Perennials (4-6 months)

## Hot Colors

*Pink, Coral, Orange*

- |       |     |   |
|-------|-----|---|
| April | 1.  | <i>Geum</i> 'Totally Tangerine'                           |
|       | 2.  | <i>Geum</i> 'Coral Tempest'                               |
| May   | 3.  | Jupiter's Beard – <i>Centranthus ruber</i> 'Pretty Betsy' |
| June  | 4.  | Roses   |
|       | 5.  | Peruvian Lily – <i>Alstroemeria</i>                       |
|       | 6.  | Yarrow - <i>Achillea</i>                                  |
|       | 7.  | <i>Hydrangea</i>  |
|       | 8.  | <i>Coreopsis</i>  |
|       | 9.  | Hardy <i>Fuchsia</i>                                      |
|       | 10. | <i>Persicaria</i> 'Firetail'                              |
| July  | 11. | <i>Penstemon</i>  |
|       | 12. | <i>Echinacea</i>  |
|       | 13. | <i>Dahlia</i>   |

## Cool Colors

*Purple, Blue*

- |       |    |   |
|-------|----|---|
| April | 1. | Wallflower - <i>Erysimum</i> 'Bowles Mauve'   |
| May   | 2. | Catmint – <i>Nepeta</i> 'Six Hills Giant'   |
|       | 3. | <i>Allium Schubertii</i> and 'Gladiator'<br>(1 mo bloom, seeds heads on for months) |
|       | 4. | <i>Geranium</i> 'Rozanne'   |
| June  | 5. | Sage – <i>Salvia</i> 'Caradonna'  |
| July  | 6. | Hummingbird Mint – <i>Agastache</i> 'Blue Fortune'                                  |
|       | 7. | <i>Gaura</i> 'Sparkle White'  |