

REGIONAL REPORTS: Plants to build a bed around

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SHADE

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GARDEN**

**EARTH-FRIENDLY
CONTAINERS**

Fruit trees for
SMALL SPACES

WESTERN NATIVES
that anyone can grow



‘Trevi Fountain’ has the best foliage of all pulmonarias

Pulmonaria ‘Trevi Fountain’

ZONES: 4–9

SIZE: 9 to 12 inches tall and 12 to 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Partial shade; average to moist, well-drained soil

NATIVE RANGE: Garden hybrid

Pulmonaria are clump-forming perennials whose leaves range from solid green to spotted or blotched with silver. In some cultivars the silver spotting is so dense that the leaves appear almost silver-white. According to Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery, the spotting is caused by air pockets in the leaves that mask the chlorophyll and serve to cool the lower surface of the leaves. With a lot of winning cultivars on the market, one of my favorites is ‘Trevi Fountain’. It has beautiful foliage with all the right stuff: just enough silver spotting to create a nice pattern, and early spring blossoms in a lovely shade of blue. Pulmonaria blossoms range from pink to blue to purple, but with silver foliage, I prefer blue blossoms. After they start to fade, remove the spent flower stems so that the flush of larger variegated foliage that emerges after flowering can take center stage. If you neglect to deadhead, you will likely end up with a smattering of seedlings around the parent plant. While they are easily removed, you might consider letting a few mature to see what the offspring look like. In my own garden, one of my favorite pulmonarias is a seedling that showed up after I failed to thoroughly deadhead my plants. Two additional cultivars worth consideration are ‘Samurai’, with almost completely silver, spear-shaped leaves and cobalt blue flowers, and ‘Raspberry Splash’, which, as the name implies, has silver-splotched leaves and raspberry blossoms. With any pulmonaria, too much sun or excessively dry soil can lead to browning on the edges of the foliage. Some cultivars are prone to powdery mildew, but ‘Trevi Fountain’ is definitely not one of them.



Plant ‘Silk Tassel’ Japanese sedge up close to admire its foliage

Carex morrowii ‘Silk Tassel’

ZONES: 5–9

SIZE: 12 to 15 inches tall and 18 inches wide

CONDITIONS: Partial shade; moist to wet soil

NATIVE RANGE: Japan

Native to the alpine areas of Japan, Japanese sedge forms a dense mound of very fine grass blades. ‘Silk Tassel’ is a special form, with a small silvery-white stripe down the center of each leaf that turns the entire mound of foliage into a delicate pile of airy silver. I like to use ‘Silk Tassel’ along a garden path or the edge of the garden where you can closely admire its delicate foliage. ‘Silk Tassel’ is especially dramatic when located near large-leaved plants—hostas, for example—as the contrast plays up its delicate nature. While this plant is evergreen in Zones 8–9, in colder regions its foliage should be cut down in early spring.



SOUTH

**GIANT CONEFLOWER***Rudbeckia maxima***ZONES:** 4–9**SIZE:** 5 to 7 feet tall and 3 to 4 feet wide**CONDITIONS:** Full sun to light shade; prefers moist, well-drained soil but can tolerate some drought**NATIVE RANGE:** Central and Southern United States

If you're looking for a unique coneflower that also supports wildlife, this is the one for you. With bluish-green basal leaves that can grow 2 feet long, and flower stalks that tower 5 to 7 feet tall, it is sure to make any garden visitor stop and stare. This remarkable perennial is native from Texas to Missouri, and Oklahoma to Arkansas. In warmer climates the basal foliage stays green year-round, and goldfinches love to eat the seeds, making it an extra delight in winter. This coneflower is easy to grow, only needing its flower stalks to be removed in late winter or early spring.

**CORAL HONEYSUCKLE***Lonicera sempervirens***ZONES:** 4–9**SIZE:** 8 to 20 feet tall and 3 to 6 feet wide**CONDITIONS:** Full sun; moderately moist, well-drained soil, preferably rich in organic matter; tolerates clay**NATIVE RANGE:** Eastern United States

My absolute favorite vine is coral honeysuckle. Easily twining up whatever trellis you choose, it charms from May to June, when it is covered in tubular flowers that butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds flock to. Following the brilliant flowers are showy red berries that birds gobble up throughout a good portion of the year. This is a host plant for the spring azure butterfly and snowberry clearwing moth. It would be hard to pick a better plant to support our native fauna, especially considering its huge native range. Heavy pruning of dead growth is occasionally needed in spring. Aside from that, maintenance is almost unnecessary.

**'DARK TOWERS' PENSTEMON***Penstemon 'Dark Towers'***ZONES:** 3–8**SIZE:** 18 to 36 inches tall and 1 to 3 feet wide**CONDITIONS:** Full sun; average to dry, well-drained soil**NATIVE RANGE:** Hybrid of several North American species

Deep burgundy-colored spring foliage and striking flower stalks make 'Dark Towers' the centerpiece of any garden bed, despite its small stature. Its flowers are attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees. Blooming pale pink in late spring to early summer, its flowers shoot up above the basal foliage on 3-foot-tall racemes, which can be removed after flowering. It tolerates heat, drought, and humidity, and is generally easy to care for. Be sure it has good drainage to reduce the likelihood of root rot, and good airflow to diminish the chance of powdery mildew and rusts.

BLUE SAGE • *Salvia azurea***ZONES:** 5–9**SIZE:** 3 to 6 feet tall and 2 to 4 feet wide**CONDITIONS:** Full sun; prefers well-drained soil but can tolerate clay, dry, shallow, or rocky soil**NATIVE RANGE:** Southeastern and Central United States

Blue sage is a fantastic late-summer-to-early-fall-blooming perennial. Attractive to numerous pollinators including bees and butterflies, it is also deer resistant and drought tolerant. I adore it for its willowy structure that allows it to sway gently with the breeze, while its azure blue flowers are a wonderful contrast to various goldenrods (*Solidago* spp. and cvs., Zones 3–9) that bloom around the same time. Native to a large portion of the United States—from Utah to North Carolina and Florida to Wisconsin—this hardy native can tolerate many growing conditions. It needs little care aside from cutting dead stalks away in late winter or early spring. Pruning it back by half in mid-June will keep it from falling over in late summer downpours.

REGIONAL EXPERT

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