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# Garden Gate

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Even after their spring blooms fade, big alliums hold their dramatic shape. Meet four great alliums on page 12.

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**ON THE COVER:** 'Pinball Wizard'  
allium's unique shape stands out  
in a spring garden.  
Photo: Jack Coyier

**ON THE BACK COVER:** Yellow peonies?  
Sure. 'Garden Treasure' is fragrant, too!  
Photo: David McClure



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garden gate's

# top 4 perennial combos

# pick's



Do you have a new garden to fill with plants? Or maybe your garden is well-established and just has a few empty spots to fill. What about a situation that you just don't know what to do with? Whatever the case, there's a plant combo that can help your garden look better.

**WHAT MAKES A GOOD COMBO?** First, the plants need to share the same cultural needs — daylilies need lots of sun and hostas need some shade. Plants just don't look good when they're struggling in a spot not suited to them. After that, you want to look for interesting flower color and foliage combinations, bloom time, size of plant and so on. If this sounds complicated to you, don't worry: I've pulled together a few combos — two for shade and two for sun — that will grow well in most areas of the country. (Just make sure they have reasonably well-drained soil.) To make it easy, I've listed a mail-order source for each plant just in case you don't find it locally.

As you probably know, a garden is never really done, is it? Gardeners are always looking for new planting combinations — let's get going and take a look at a few! □  
— Sherri Ribbey

## Spring spruce-up for a shady spot

Spanish bluebells and 'Delaware' foamflower can take the competition from tree roots and still look good. Both bloom in spring and don't have any pest or disease problems to speak of.

Plant Spanish bluebell bulbs 3 to 4 inches deep and 4 to 6 inches apart in fall. They grow quickly and spread by bulblet or reseeding. The only drawback is that the foliage goes dormant after flowering. Fortunately, 'Delaware' foamflower not only keeps going but has gorgeous maroon fall foliage. Its pretty white blooms last four to six weeks. This foamflower also spreads quickly by stolons — up to 18 inches in one season.



**'Delaware' foamflower**  
*Tiarella cordifolia*

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** White flowers in spring  
**Light** Full to part shade  
**Size** 4 to 12 in. tall, 18 to 24 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Lazy S's Farm Nursery  
[www.lazysfarm.com](http://www.lazysfarm.com)



**Spanish bluebells**  
*Hyacinthoides hispanica*

**Type** Bulb  
**Blooms** Lavender flowers in spring  
**Light** Part shade to full sun  
**Size** 12 to 18 in. tall, 3 to 6 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Old House Gardens  
[www.oldhousegardens.com](http://www.oldhousegardens.com)  
734-995-1486

## Sizzlin' summer shade

You won't get bored looking at this combo, whether it's blooming or not. Each plant has dramatically different leaves. Sandwiched between the round ruffles of lady's mantle and the heart-shaped hosta leaves is the deeply cut, frilly foliage of astilbe.

Water is the key to keeping these plants looking good. This mix of pretty flowers and foliage needs a moist place in your yard, regular watering or both in the hottest parts of summer. This will keep flowers prolific and prevent leaf edges from getting crispy. A 2- to 3-inch layer of organic mulch will help cut down the number of times you have to visit with the hose. While all these plants will grow in full shade, they're really better off in part shade. In fact, if the hosta's in too much shade, the leaves will have a slight green cast. Morning sun — even in the South — is best since it's not as harsh as afternoon light. The bright gold foliage of 'Sun Power' hosta is a great backdrop for this combo. Its gold color stays true from the time it emerges in spring to late fall.

'Fanal' has the deepest red flowers of any astilbe. Leave spent blooms on the plant to dry for added interest the rest of the year — you don't have to worry about it reseeding. Or cut stems off below the foliage for a tidier look. Its foliage starts out bronze and changes to deep green as it ages. Lady's mantle can reseed with abandon, so if you don't want extra plants, be sure to snip the flowers off when they're done.



### 'Sun Power' hosta

*Hosta hybrid*

**Type** Perennial

**Blooms** Purple flowers midsummer

**Light** Part shade

**Size** 18 to 24 in. tall (40 in. in flower), 36 to 48 in. wide

#### Hardiness

Cold: USDA zones 3 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Great Garden Plants, Inc.  
[www.greatgardenplants.com](http://www.greatgardenplants.com)  
877-447-4769



### 'Fanal' astilbe

*Astilbe arendsii*

**Type** Perennial

**Blooms** Red flowers in summer

**Light** Part to full shade

**Size** 18 to 20 in. tall and wide

#### Hardiness

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 8  
Heat: AHS zones 8 to 1

**Source** White Flower Farm  
[www.whiteflowerfarm.com](http://www.whiteflowerfarm.com)  
800-503-9624



### Lady's mantle

*Alchemilla mollis*

**Type** Perennial

**Blooms** Chartreuse in summer

**Light** Full sun to part shade

**Size** 10 to 18 in. tall,  
18 to 30 in. wide

#### Hardiness

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 8  
Heat: AHS zones 8 to 1

**Source** Bluestone Perennials, Inc.  
[www.bluestoneperennials.com](http://www.bluestoneperennials.com)  
800-852-5243



### Pastel palette

Flowering bulbs may start the show in spring, but here's a combo that will kick it into high gear.

'Caesar's Brother' Siberian iris likes damp, even boggy, soils but does just fine in drier situations because of its deep and dense root system. It doesn't need division very often unless you notice the center dying out, and it can grow in the same spot for years.

As warm breezes drift through on sunny days, you'll notice the fragrance of the peony and dianthus. Itoh peonies like 'Pink Double Dandy' are a cross between tree peonies and the traditional types, with the best characteristics of both. Great flowers and excellent cold-hardiness make this a peony worth growing.

The other pink flower in this combo is the dianthus. 'Bath's Pink' is super-easy to grow but needs good drainage to keep it healthy. After this mass of flowers fade, make things easy on yourself and deadhead the plant with hedge shears. You'll get a second, though lighter, rebloom in summer.



'Caesar's Brother'  
Siberian iris  
*Iris sibirica*

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Purple in spring  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 36 to 48 in. tall,  
18 to 24 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 3 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Bluestone Perennials, Inc.  
[www.bluestoneperennials.com](http://www.bluestoneperennials.com)  
800-852-5243



Keiko™ Itoh peony  
*Paeonia* 'Pink Double Dandy'

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Fragrant pink in spring  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 24 to 30 in. tall,  
30 to 48 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 8  
Heat: AHS zones 8 to 1

**Source** Local garden centers  
or visit [www.monrovia.com](http://www.monrovia.com)  
to find a retailer



'Bath's Pink' dianthus  
*Dianthus* hybrid

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Fragrant pink in spring  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 8 to 12 in. tall and wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 3 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Goodwin Creek Gardens  
[www.goodwincreekgardens.com](http://www.goodwincreekgardens.com)  
800-846-7359



**'Mama Mia' coneflower**  
*Echinacea hybrid*

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Salmon-orange  
in summer  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 20 to 26 in. tall,  
26 to 30 in. wide

**Hardiness**  
Cold: USDA zones 4 to 10  
Heat: AHS zones 10 to 1  
**Source** Klehm's Song Sparrow  
Farm and Nursery  
www.songsparrow.com  
800-553-3715

## Butterfly bonanza

Sunny summer days just aren't complete without a few butterflies flitting from flower to flower. This border of brightly colored flowers will not only draw your attention but that of lots of butterflies, too. Coneflower and sedum are late-summer butterfly magnets. This group of plants is so easy to care for, you'll have plenty of time to enjoy them flitting from flower to flower.

Daylilies need regular moisture to look their best but can take some dry spells once plants are established. Deadheading them every day or two will keep plants looking tidy.

Tall sedum doesn't need any extra watering. Though the stems on this cultivar do tend to flop, it's easy enough to stake plants in late spring while the foliage is still small. That way, you won't break off stems and leaves as you're trying to get the stakes close enough to hold the plant up.

Through hybridization, coneflower has been transformed into a rainbow of colors. Not all of the new colors are as reliable as the old standard, but 'Mama Mia' has been getting good reviews. Flowers make subtle color changes as they age, starting out salmon-orange and ending closer to pink. Deadhead the spent blooms to encourage a repeat performance — and more butterflies!



**'Rocket City' daylily**  
*Hemerocallis hybrid*

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Orange in summer  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 28 to 36 in. tall,  
18 to 24 in. wide

**Hardiness**  
Cold: USDA zones 3 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1  
**Source** Tranquil Lake  
Nursery, Inc.  
www.tranquil-lake.com  
508-252-4002



**'Matrona' tall sedum**  
*Sedum hybrid*

**Type** Perennial  
**Blooms** Pink in summer  
**Light** Full sun  
**Size** 18 to 24 in. tall and wide  
**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 3 to 9  
Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1  
**Source** Niche Gardens  
www.nichegardens.com  
919-967-0078