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FRONT YARD BETTER** page 28

# Garden Gate

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## Autumn Color Color COLOR!

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Don't let your fallen leaves go to waste this autumn. We'll show you several ways you can put them to use on page 24.

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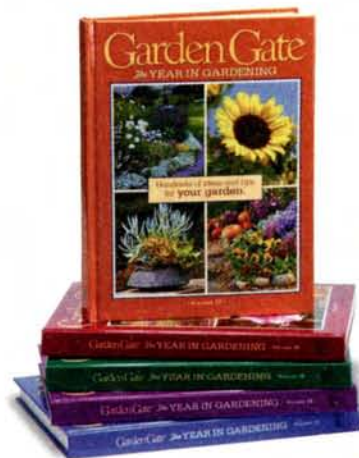
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**ON THE COVER:** Splash color across your garden every fall. Find out how on page 32.  
Photo: Allen Rokach

**ON THE BACK COVER:** Colorful containers = curb appeal. We'll show you more great ideas on page 28.  
Photo: Jack Coyier



## buy the best perennial

Looking over the rows and rows of perennials at the garden center, it's hard to know in which ones to invest your hard-earned cash and precious time. If your state university has a perennial trial garden, check out their results to see how different plants perform in similar soil and weather conditions. But if you don't have a garden like this to visit, the University of Georgia's Dr. Allan Armitage can help. He runs the research gardens (which he started in 1982), testing and evaluating plants from breeders all over the world. After growing a minimum of three years in the trial garden, they're given performance ratings based on:

- Number of flowers
- Leaf color
- Uniformity of habit and flowers
- Resistance to insects and disease
- Overall appearance

Although Allan looks for plants that can take the heat and humidity of the South, he also compares notes with researchers in other parts of the country. So he has a good idea of which plants are all-around top performers. Take a look at the great mix of plants he's pulled together for you here. There are nine perennials and one bulb, some for sun and some for shade, and something to fit everyone's garden. Now you'll know exactly which perennials to reach for the next time you're out shopping. □

— Sherri Ribbey



### 'Radius' astilbe

#### *Astilbe* hybrid

'Radius' is one of the few cultivars that grows well in zones 7 and warmer. It has good-looking foliage and beautiful red flowers. And while this astilbe is heat-tolerant, it's cold-tolerant, too, doing just as well in Northern gardens. Though 'Radius' tolerates heat, it still needs even soil moisture to keep the foliage from getting crispy. Full sun is OK in the North, just be sure to water regularly. In the South, plants do better in afternoon shade.

**BOTTOM LINE** Great heat-tolerance and beautiful flowers.



**Blooms** Red in early to midsummer

**Light** Full sun to full shade

**Soil** Moist, well-drained

**Size** 20 to 26 in. tall, 16 to 24 in. wide

#### **Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 9

Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Garden Crossings  
www.gardencrossings.com  
616-875-6355





### 'Georgia Peach' coral bells

*Heuchera* hybrid

If you're looking for a coral bells that's not green or burgundy, this is the one to grow. There are at least 30 different coral bells in the trial gardens at the University of Georgia, and 'Georgia Peach' is the number one choice hands down. Why? The beautiful peachy pink foliage is certainly the top reason. But the fact is, this perennial is more vigorous than other similarly colored coral bells, too.

Its creamy white flowers appear later than some coral bells, and hummingbirds like them a lot.

**BOTTOM LINE**

Great-looking foliage on vigorous plants.



**Blooms** Creamy white in early summer

**Light** Full to part shade

**Soil** Moist, well-drained

**Size** 12 to 16 in. tall (30 in. in flower), 18 to 24 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 9

Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Joy Creek Nursery  
www.joycreek.com  
503-543-7474



### 'Misty Lace' goat's beard

*Aruncus* hybrid

Trial managers in Chicago and New York also praise this goat's beard for its heat- and humidity-tolerance, as well as its cold-hardiness! Besides that, it's just the right size for any garden — not as huge as the species and not as tiny as Korean goat's beard. Part to full shade is essential in the South to keep its lacy blue-green foliage looking good. In the North, 'Misty Lace' tolerates more sun with regular watering.

Deadheading flowers won't encourage reblooming but it does make the attractive mound of foliage look even better.

**BOTTOM LINE**

This is one tough good-looking plant.



**Blooms** White from late spring to early summer

**Light** Full sun to part shade

**Soil** Moist to wet and well-drained

**Size** 18 to 24 in. tall and wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 4 to 7

Heat: AHS zones 7 to 1

**Source** Bluestone Perennials, Inc.  
www.bluestoneperennials.com  
800-852-5243



### 'HGC Pink Frost' hellebore

*Helleborus x ballardiae*

You'll see new hellebore cultivars by the truckload over the next few years. But this cultivar should be one that sticks around. It has a multitude of outward-facing pink flowers with wine-red stems.

You might find 'HGC Pink Frost' sold as a gift plant in late fall or early winter. Once the flowers start to fade don't toss it — plant this perennial outside. Providing the soil isn't frozen, the plant won't mind at all. Otherwise, just keep 'HGC Pink Frost' inside in a sunny window until spring.

**BOTTOM LINE** Lots of outward-facing flowers.



**Blooms** Pink in late winter to early spring

**Light** Full to part shade

**Soil** Moist, well-drained

**Size** 12 to 15 in. tall, 18 to 24 in. wide

**Hardiness**

Cold: USDA zones 5 to 9

Heat: AHS zones 9 to 1

**Source** Plant Delights Nursery, Inc.  
www.plantdelights.com  
919-772-4794