

**FLOWERS FOREVER! Our 11
Longest-Blooming Perennials**

page 18



Garden Gate

December 2010 • Issue 96
www.GardenGateMagazine.com

THE ULTIMATE NO-CARE GARDENS

- ▶ **ADD TONS of COLOR with Cottage Gardens** page 6
- ▶ **9 Plants + 2 Hours of Work a Year = A GORGEOUS GETAWAY** page 24

**Before & After: From
OVERGROWN to "OH, WOW!"** page 8

**NO MORE WINTER BLAHS
Make Your Garden SHINE
Even on the Dreariest Days** page 28

**BRING ON THE BIRDS
EXCLUSIVE Back Yard Design** page 40

**Gorgeous
Color,
Dramatic Shape**

— Your Garden Needs Delphiniums!

page 14

contents

december 2010 • issue no. 96

Earn \$25!
We want a region-by-region snapshot of our readers' easiest-ever flowers, and your best tips for getting finicky plants to grow. (How do you get a lilac to bloom in Louisiana?)

{ Our favorite tip in each region will earn \$25 at www.GardenGateStore.com! }

Visit www.GardenGateMagazine.com/regionalsurvey to share your tips and picks.

in every issue

- AT HOME GARDENER**
create a charming cottage garden anywhere.....**6**
- BEFORE & AFTER**
shape up a neglected bed.....**8**
- GARDEN GATE'S TOP PICKS**
11 long-blooming perennials **18**
- DESIGN CHALLENGE**
birds, welcome! **Web** **38**
- FROM THE DRAWING BOARD**
bird-attracting deck planting..... **40**
- CONTAINER RECIPE**
pansies in pots: 3 cool looks..... **43**
- NOTES FROM THE TEST GARDEN**
start perennials from seed and save money..... **48**
- EDITOR'S CHOICE**
gold beret barberry..... **50**

features

- Easy Primroses..... 12**
Add to your spring palette of plants with these three easy-to-grow beauties.
- ON THE COVER: Delphiniums..... 14**
You'll be the envy of your block after we show you how to grow this sometimes-challenging perennial to perfection.
- Nearly No-Care Getaway **Web**..... 24**
Think you can't have a beautiful garden that needs only an hour or two of work all year? You can!
- Simple Beauty..... 26**
Find out how to use flea market treasures to create a fascinating ornament for your garden.
- Winter Wonders..... 28**
Don't give up on your garden in winter. Our tips can help you make the cold months more colorful.
- Windowboxes..... 32**
Windowboxes can be more than just window dressing. Enjoy these versatile planters in every part of your garden.

ON THE COVER: Delphiniums are the stars in an early spring border.
Photo: David C. McClure

ON THE BACK COVER: Winter isn't far away, as frost nips the roses at our test garden.
Photo: David C. McClure



To find more tips, plans and step-by-step instructions, look for these online exclusives on our Web site.

www.GardenGateMagazine.com

- Additional nearly no-care getaway **planting plan**
- Complete bird-attracting back yard **planting plan**



CORRECTION: In issue 94's 9 Bugs to Stop Now!, we incorrectly identified a photo of katydid eggs as scale. Here's what scale really looks like.

PHOTO: © Steven Nordmeyer (scale)

departments

- reader tips..... **4**
pest watch..... **5**
what's new..... **44**
did you know?..... **45**
ask *Garden Gate*..... **46**
weed watch..... **47**
finishing touches..... **52**

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Title of publication: Garden Gate. 2. Publication no.: 1083-8295. 3. Filing date: August 23, 2010. 4. Issue frequency: Bimonthly. 5. No. of issues published annually: 6 (six). 6. Annual subscription price: \$24.00. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, (Polk County), Iowa 50312-5306. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, (Polk County), Iowa 50312-5306. 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of publisher, editor and managing editor: Publisher: Donald B. Peschke, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312; Editor: Steven M. Nordmeyer, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312; Managing Editor: W.A. 10. Owner: August Home Publishing Company, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312; Donald B. Peschke, 2200 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50312. 11. Known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 12. (does not apply) 13. Publication name: Garden Gate. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: July/Aug 2010 (#94). 15. Extent and nature of circulation:

	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months.	Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date.
A. Total no. copies (net press run)	418,862	400,778
B. Paid and/or requested circulation		
1. Paid/requested outside-county mail subscriptions stated on form 3541. (Include advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	361,160	348,327
2. Paid in-county subscriptions (including advertiser's proof and exchange copies)	0	0
3. Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, counter sales, and other non-USPS paid distribution	12,369	10,914
4. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
C. Total paid and/or requested circulation	373,529	359,241
D. Free distribution by mail (Samples, complimentary, and other free)		
1. Outside-county as stated on form 3541	161	135
2. In-county as stated on form 3541	0	0
3. Other classes mailed through the USPS	0	0
E. Free distribution outside the mail (Carriers or other means)	0	0
F. Total free distribution	161	135
G. Total distribution	373,690	359,376
H. Copies not distributed	45,172	41,402
I. Total	418,862	400,778
J. Percent paid and/or requested circulation	99.96%	99.96%

16. This statement of ownership will be printed in the Dec. '10 (#96) issue of this publication.
17. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.
(Signed) Steven M. Nordmeyer, Editor

Yes, you can grow these charming spring perennials! Our 3 top picks.

Easy Primroses

Botanical Names

Crocus *Muscari armeniacum*
Daffodil
Narcissus spp.
Hyacinth
Hyacinthus spp.
Primrose
Primula spp.
Squill
Scilla sibirica
Tulip *Tulipa* spp.

Everybody has tulips, crocus or daffodils blooming in spring, maybe even hyacinth or squill. Not everyone grows primroses — but they should! Primroses are super cold-hardy and pest- and disease-resistant. And they have colorful, charming flowers for up to three weeks! With a range of bloom times, you can have flowers from the time temperatures warm in spring until summer flowers are ready to pop.

If you've had disappointing results with primroses in the past, don't give up. Some are tricky to grow. But I'll show you three of the most easy-going types and how to grow them at right. Then I'll give you a plan in "Pretty primroses" below.

GROWING TIPS Where summers get hot and humid, plant your primroses under deciduous trees. There they'll get the sun they need to flower in spring.

And when the trees leaf out in summer, they'll be protected from the worst of the heat. Use a couple inches of organic mulch to help keep soil moisture even — letting it dry out is hard on the plants. Even so, don't be surprised if your plants disappear in the heat of summer. It's not unusual for primroses to go dormant and return again in spring. Winter snow cover is often unreliable so provide some protection. Use straw or evergreen boughs rather than leaves, which can mat down and smother plants.

Give primroses a shady, moist place to grow and you'll find they even spread. One small plant can turn into a dozen in a few years. So you see, primroses aren't that hard to grow. You just need the right type and a few helpful hints. □

—Sherri Ribbey

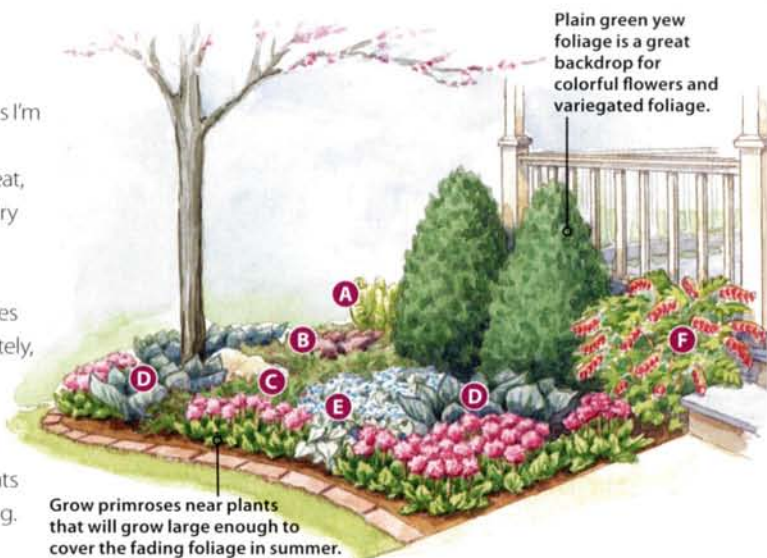
PRETTY PRIMROSES

Get your garden going early with this plan. Any of the primroses I'm showing you at right will work in this situation.

These plants are near a concrete sidewalk, which radiates heat, so keep an eye on the soil. Depending on the weather, it may dry out quickly, and you'll need to water often. A 2- to 3-in. layer of mulch will help conserve moisture.

When the primroses are done blooming, the foliage stretches and looks a little gangly — kind of like bulb foliage. But fortunately, the other plants in this plan can help. Broad hosta leaves and variegated heart-shaped brunnera foliage will draw attention and cover the fading primroses.

That's not the end of this garden bed. Late summer highlights ligularia and astilbe flowers so your season goes out with a bang.



THE GARDEN'S PALETTE

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant	Type	Blooms	Height/Width	Cold/Heat Zones
A	Ostrich fern <i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i>	3	Perennial	NA	36-60 in./18-24 in.	3-7/7-1
B	Ligularia <i>Ligularia</i> 'Britt Marie Crawford'	1	Perennial	Yellow	3-4 ft./2-3 ft.	3-9/9-1
C	Astilbe <i>Astilbe</i> 'August Light' ('Augustleuchten')	11	Perennial	Red	24-28 in./15-24 in.	4-9/9-1
D	Hosta <i>Hosta</i> 'Halcyon'	4	Perennial	Lilac	18-24 in./30-36 in.	3-9/9-1
E	Brunnera <i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Looking Glass'	2	Perennial	Blue	12-18 in./12-18 in.	4-9/9-1
F	Old-fashioned bleeding heart <i>Lamprocapnos spectabilis</i>	1	Perennial	Pink and white	24-36 in./18-30 in.	3-8/8-1



Nearly No-Care Getaway

Have you ever seen a garden that just took your breath away? Have you wondered how much work it took to keep it looking that way?

This pretty corner planting is beautiful to behold. But, beyond that, it has easy-care features and plants that make it a snap to take care of. In fact, once this garden is planted, everything you need to do all year takes only a couple hours — and you could get by with even less. Here's what makes it so effortless:

EASY FLOORING See the landing with interlocking stones at right? This type of surface provides a solid foundation without a lot of maintenance — no need to interplant, and no weeds to pull!

NEARLY NO-CARE PLANTS The plants, too, are beautiful and simple to grow. Once established, they're very undemanding. (I've broken down the tasks in the checklist at right.) The perennials don't need any special attention to look good except a



little deadheading if you like. None of the shrubs needs regular pruning, though where it's hardy, you might cut back the fatsia in spring if it gets too large. And the two trees bring year-round interest, with no maintenance needed (except a little fall leaf raking). Want a nearly no-care garden with more flowers? Go to our Web extra for another plan.

Even the busiest person can fit in an hour of tidying up a year. And if you're a meticulous gardener, even a couple hours still isn't bad — especially for such a gorgeous garden! □

— Deborah Gruca

THE GARDEN'S PALETTE

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant	Type	Blooms	Height/Width	Cold/Heat Zones	Comments
A	Japanese maple <i>Acer palmatum</i> 'Shaina'	1	Small tree	NA	4-5 ft./ 3-4 ft.	5-8/8-1	Bright-red foliage in spring, turns deep red in fall; full sun to part shade
B	Brunnera <i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Jack Frost'	13	Perennial	Light blue; spring	12-18 in./ 18-24 in.	3-7/7-1	Silver foliage with green veins; prefers consistent moisture; spreads slowly
C	Carex <i>Carex</i> 'Ice Dance'	28	Perennial	Pink; summer	1 ft./1-2 ft.	5-9/9-1	Dark green foliage with white edges
D	Dwarf sweet box <i>Sarcococca hookeriana humilis</i>	4	Shrub	White; spring	1-2 ft./ spreading	6-9/9-1	Evergreen ground cover with deep green foliage; blue-black berries follow flowers; spreads slowly
E	Lace-cap hydrangea <i>Hydrangea serrata</i> 'Beni-Gaku'	2	Shrub	Pink to red; summer	3-4 ft./ 3-4 ft.	5-9/9-1	Blooms and grows best in moist soil in part shade; give regular moisture the first season as it establishes
F	Japanese stewartia <i>Stewartia pseudocamellia</i>	1	Small tree	White; midsummer	20-40 ft./ 25-30 ft.	5-8/8-1	Orange or red foliage in autumn; interesting bark; in hot climates, does best with afternoon shade
G	Hosta <i>Hosta</i> 'Blue Angel'	3	Perennial	Lavender; summer	30 in./36-48 in.	3-9/9-1	Giant, heart-shaped, blue-gray foliage; slow growing
H	Sweet box <i>Sarcococca confusa</i>	7	Shrub	Fragrant white; winter	3-6 ft./ 2-3 ft.	6-9/9-1	Evergreen; winter flowers followed by black berries; drought- and shade-tolerant
I	Fatsia <i>Fatsia japonica</i>	1	Shrub	Brown; spring	6-12 ft./6-12 ft.	8-10/10-8	Large, evergreen, glossy blue-green leaves

bird-attracting deck planting

Want to attract birds even in a small planting? Here's a plan designed to go around an intimate deck — though you can easily adapt it to any sunny outdoor space.

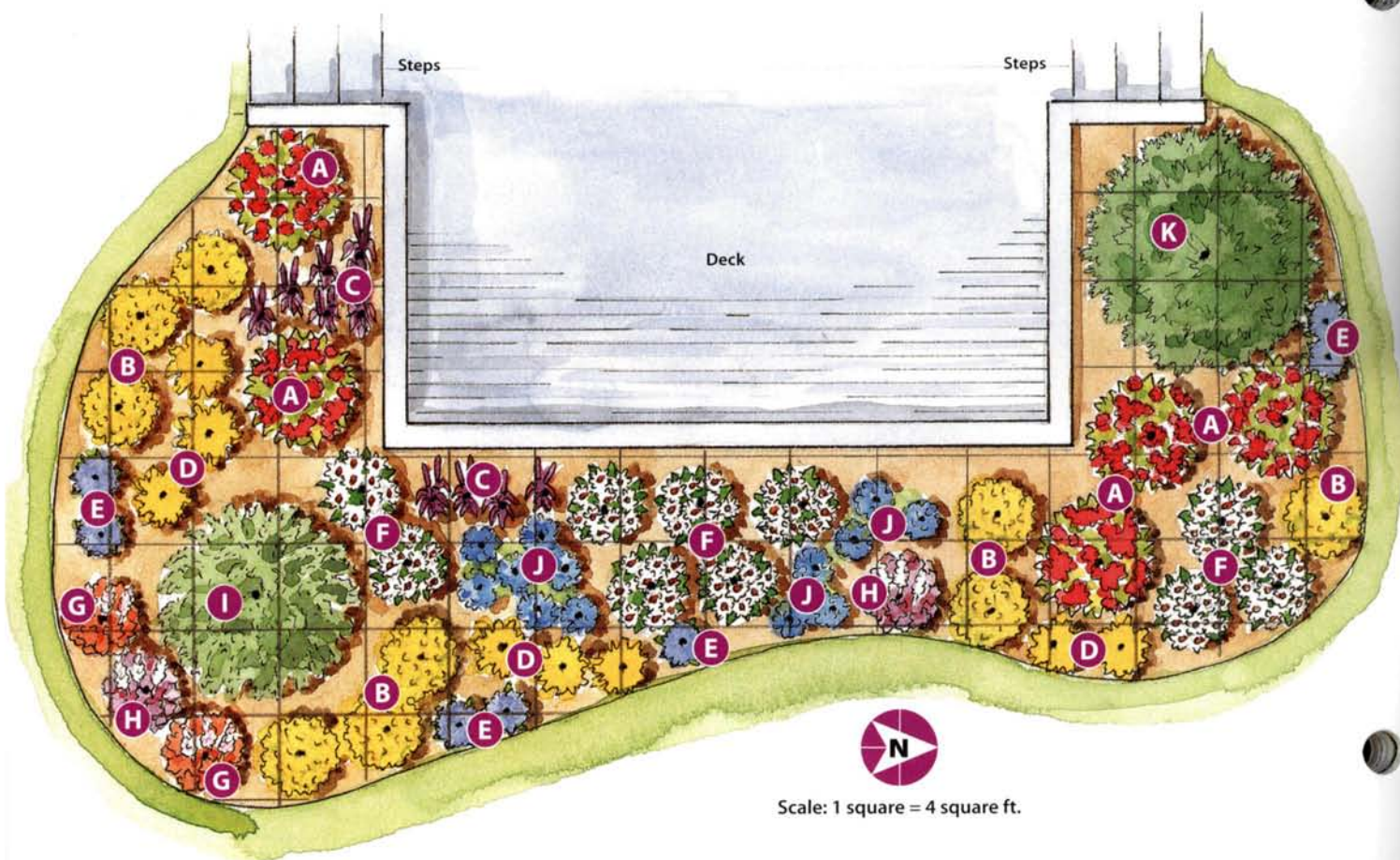
Farther out in this back yard on page 38, the Colorado spruce and the arborvitae provide safe shelter even in the dead of winter. The plants in the design around this deck focus on offering lots of food to birds and butterflies. Shrubs and perennials make up most of it, with some annuals thrown in for extra color.

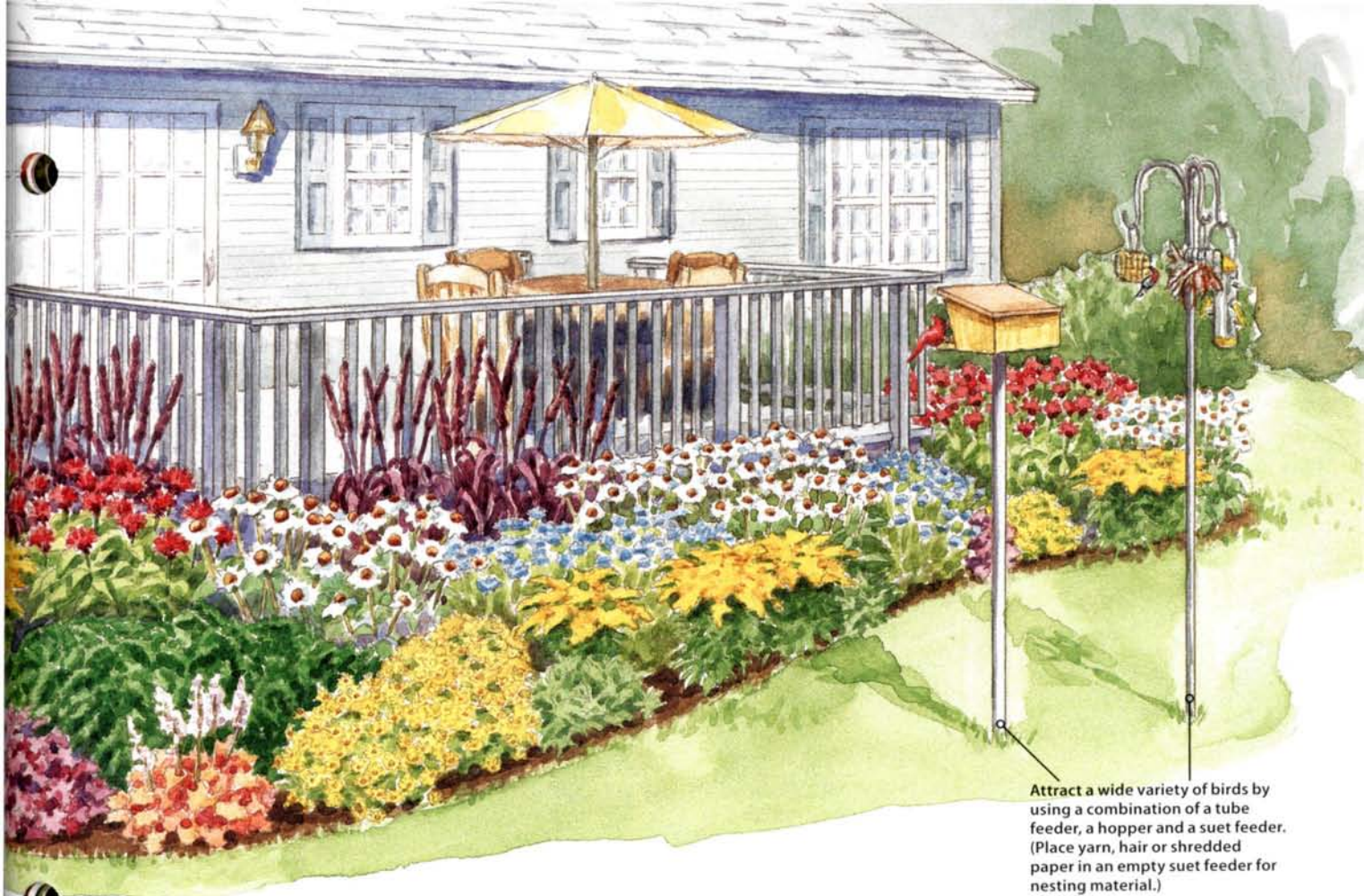
NEED SEEDS? This plan includes a few fruit-bearing shrubs. Spreading yew provides a green backdrop through the winter and red summer fruit. And rock cotoneaster flowers in early summer and produces fruit in late summer to fall. But this border concentrates on seed-bearing plants to mini-

mize the mess on the deck. Threadleaf coreopsis, purple coneflower and ornamental millet add plenty of seeds to those offered in the birdfeeders. Hungry birds will eat the ripening seeds of bachelor's button, too. The seeds of this pretty blue annual are easy to sow outdoors in spring and the plants will self-seed around the garden.

DON'T FORGET THE HUMMERS Hummingbirds have plenty to feed on here as well. The flowers of the lilacs out in the yard will give these tiny winged wonders lots of nectar to eat in spring. And later, the red flowers of bee balm and two kinds of coral bells will keep them busy closer to the deck. This planting also has lots to offer butterflies all season. Even in fall, asters and goldenrod will give them a lavish buffet. □

— Deborah Gruca





Attract a wide variety of birds by using a combination of a tube feeder, a hopper and a suet feeder. (Place yarn, hair or shredded paper in an empty suet feeder for nesting material.)

THE GARDEN'S PALETTE

Code	Plant Name	No. to Plant	Type	Blooms	Height/Width	Cold/Heat Zones	Comments
A	Bee balm <i>Monarda</i> 'Jacob Cline'	5	Perennial	Red; early summer	3-4 ft./ 2-3 ft.	4-9/9-1	Erect stems; attracts hummingbirds; mildew-resistant; divide every three to four years in spring or fall
B	Threadleaf coreopsis <i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> 'Moonbeam'	9	Perennial	Pale yellow; early to midsummer	18-24 in./ 18-24 in.	3-9/9-1	Shear plant back by half in midsummer to encourage a smaller late-season rebloom
C	Ornamental millet <i>Pennisetum glaucum</i> 'Purple Majesty'	10	Tender perennial	Purple; early to late summer	48-60 in./ 9-12 in.	9-11/12-1	Striking dark purple stems and wide leaves; flower spikes have purple-brown seeds that birds like
D	Goldenrod <i>Solidago</i> 'Crown of Rays'	8	Perennial	Yellow; midsummer to fall	18-24 in./ 12-18 in.	5-9/9-1	Long bloom period; attractive to bees and butterflies; divide every three to four years
E	Aster <i>Aster</i> 'Wood's Light Blue'	7	Perennial	Blue; late summer to fall	12-15 in./ 12-15 in.	4-8/8-1	Mildew- and rust-resistant; compact habit needs no staking; attracts butterflies
F	Purple coneflower <i>Echinacea purpurea</i> 'White Swan'	10	Perennial	White; summer	24-36 in./ 18-24 in.	3-9/9-1	Drought-tolerant; leave ornamental seed heads for birds to feed on; divide every three to four years
G	Coral bells <i>Heuchera</i> 'Caramel'	2	Perennial	Light pink; summer	9-18 in./ 12-24 in.	4-9/9-1	Leaves emerge gray-red in spring and age to caramel; mulch after ground freezes to prevent root heaving
H	Coral bells <i>Heuchera</i> 'Purple Petticoats'	2	Perennial	White; early summer	12-18 in./ 18-24 in.	4-9/9-1	White spring flowers attract hummingbirds; dark purple, frilly edged leaves have best color with afternoon shade
I	Rock cotoneaster <i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	1	Shrub	Pale pink; early summer	12-30 in./ 4-7 ft.	4-7/7-1	Small, pale pink flowers in early summer, red berries in late summer to fall; red-purple fall foliage; slow growing
J	Bachelor's button <i>Centaurea cyanus</i> 'Blue Boy'	13	Annual	Blue; summer to frost	24-30 in./ 9-12 in.	NA/12-1	Drought-tolerant; good cut or dried flowers; will self-seed
K	Spreading yew <i>Taxus xmedia</i> 'Densiformis'	1	Shrub	NA	3-4 ft./ 4-6 ft.	4-7/7-1	'Densiformis' is a female cultivar that produces red, fleshy fruit; spray with anti-desiccant to prevent winter burn