


MESSENGER-INQUIRER

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March 29, 2025

Fall Flowering Perennials for Your Garden
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What flowering plants bloom in late summer and fall besides chrysanthemums? Several fall-blooming perennials add color and interest to the landscape. Add these to the list for planting this spring. Remember, perennial plants live from year to year.

Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*) is a past Perennial Plant Association's Plant of the Year. It is covered with small, lavender-blue flowers from late July through September. The tubular flowers appear along 12- to 15-inch stems above the foliage. The height of the plant may range from 3 to 5 feet tall, depending on the cultivar. Russian sage performs best in full sun and in well-drained soil. The gray-white foliage and the long blooming period make this plant very desirable. Also, the foliage adds winter interest to the garden. Cut the plant back in the spring before it starts to grow. When the leaf is crushed, it has a pungent odor that reminds me of sage.

A unique perennial that blooms in late summer is showy sedum (*Sedum spectabile*). The foliage is thick and fleshy. The leaves are silvery-green in color. At first, a green mound of foliage appears. As the plant grows, it increases in height. The final height ranges from 18 to 24 inches, depending on the cultivar. It keeps its mounding growth habit. As the flowers form, they

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look like little branches appearing at the top of the plant. In bloom, the flower heads are 3- to 6-inches wide. Flower colors available are red, pink, or ivory-white depending on the cultivar. Showy sedum flowers attract butterflies, which gather nectar from the blossoms. The flowers persist in the garden through early fall. Enjoy the showy sedum flowers inside the home in fresh or dried floral arrangements.

Showy sedum requires little maintenance. Well-drained soil is necessary because it rots in poorly drained soil. This plant grows in full sun or light shade. The taller cultivars may require staking to keep the stems from falling over if planted in an area receiving constant wind.

Joe Pye weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*), a native to Kentucky, blooms in July through September. The dense flower heads form at the end of stems and are made up of tiny .33-inch pink-purple flowers. The plant reaches 2 to 7 feet in height, depending on the growing conditions and the cultivar. The plant grows 2 to 4 feet wide. It prefers moist soil and full sun to part shade. It is a good plant to grow in rain gardens as well.

Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida*) blooms in late summer and fall. This plant prefers well-drained soil and can tolerate partial shade. The foliage forms a low-growing mound and may reach about 12 inches in height, depending on the cultivar. The tall flower stems allow the blossoms to gracefully tower over the foliage and give a light, airy feeling to the landscape. During flowering, the plant height may range from 2 to 4 feet, depending on the cultivar. The flower stems contain several blossoms per stem. Flower colors include white, pink, and rose. Two good cultivars of the Japanese anemone are September Charm and Honorine Jobert.

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Frikart's aster (*Aster x frikartii*) blooms in late summer to fall. The flowers are 2 to 3 inches across. The flower color may be lavender to lavender-blue with a yellow center. Frikart's aster prefers well-drained soil and full sun. The plant height ranges from 2 to 3 feet. The taller cultivars may require staking to keep them from falling over. Large groupings of Frikart's aster make a visual impact in the garden. While blooming, the flowers attract butterflies and pollinators.

Michaelmas daisy or New York aster (*Symphotrichum novi-belgii*, formally known as *Aster novi-belgii*) adds color in the late summer and fall and is a Kentucky native. The flower colors for this perennial aster include violet, white, lavender-blue, and blue. The flowers are small, about 0.75 to 1 inch wide, and form a cluster, making it look like a head. Cultivars with larger flowers are available. The height of the plant ranges from 1 to 6 feet, depending on the cultivar. The taller cultivars may require staking to keep them from falling over. This aster grows best in full sun and well-drained soil. Butterflies are attracted to this one also.

For a shady location, toad lily, (*Tricyrtis hirta*) adds color. It blooms in late summer to fall. The flowers have a white background with purple spots. The flowers are about 1 inch long and described as lily-like or orchid-like. The arching stems reach 2 to 3 feet tall and spread 1.5 to 2 feet wide. The flowers appear toward the ends of the stems. These flowers are best observed up close due to their size. This plant prefers well-drained but moisture-retentive soil high in organic matter.

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For more information about perennials that bloom in late summer and fall, contact the Daviess County Cooperative Extension Service at 270-685-8480 or annette.heisdorffer@uky.edu.

Annette's tips:

As the daffodils (*Narcissus*) bloom in your landscape, take photos and place a stake or label among the grouping. It is easy to forget where they are located. Crowded bulbs with reduced numbers of flowers need to be divided after the foliage dies and replanted, which can take place ideally in late June through August.

Check the ornamental grasses in the landscape. Cut back the foliage to about 4 to 6 inches now to avoid cutting the new growth that has started in most cases.

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