



REV UP YOUR OUTDOOR LIVING WITH EASY-CARE PLANTS

Low-maintenance flowers, foliage mean less work, more play

May 17, 2012 – The desire for low-maintenance landscapes just keeps growing, according to the latest gardening and landscaping surveys. At the same time, Americans' love for outdoor amenities like fire pits, grills, dining areas and seating shows no signs of waning (see "Recent Statistics").

So combining the two should mean less work and more play, right? Here, experts suggest fuss-free flowers and foliage for outdoor living.

"Whether you're relaxing during a private moment in your personal sanctuary or are hosting a dinner party, you don't want to come out to a tired, ailing landscape," says Anthony Tesselaar, cofounder and president of Tesselaar Plants. "The idea is to go for something that's easy-care, with season-long interest, so you never have to worry about what's outside your door."

"We all lead such busy lives," agrees California landscaper and North Coast Gardening blogger Genevieve Schmidt. "You don't want an outdoor living space where you're looking at more chores or another to-do list."

Not-so-needy blooms

If you're looking for less watering, spraying and pruning, flowers aren't out. Schmidt regularly uses drought-tolerant, blooming perennials like catmint, hardy cranesbill geraniums, ornamental sages, Russian sage, lavender, lion's tail, euphorbia, sunrose, artemisia and phlox.

Landscape roses are another favorite of Schmidt's, and she often turns to the Flower Carpet® line. Often called "desert roses" in the southwest, these shiny-leaved, colorful bloom factories can be a great choice for low-maintenance, season-long color in beds or containers.

When planted en masse, carpet roses (which spread more horizontally than vertically and become covered with a blanket of blooms) are also a great way to quickly fill in a large bed while turning it into a more low-maintenance, sustainable landscape.

The Flower Carpet range of roses, notes Tesselaar, won high marks in the Dallas Arboretum's famous plant trials in extreme heat. The series has also won the most awards for disease-resistance; most notably, Germany's coveted All Deutschland Rose (ADR) designation, the world's top honor for disease-resistant roses. "And if you want roses in containers, which succumb to drought even quicker, Flower Carpet's Next Generation line offers even better heat and humidity tolerance."

Another Tesselaar plant that did well in the Dallas Arboretum trials was the Storm™ series of agapanthus (lily of the Nile). Say Tesselaar: "It offers up to three flushes of blooms a season with full clusters of strappy foliage in between for season-long interest." Jimmy Turner, Senior Director of Gardens for the Dallas Arboretum, says it's good for mass planting because of its sturdy, multiple flower stalks, uniform height and multiple flushes of blooms, each lasting six to seven weeks. But, Tesselaar notes: "It's really a head-turner when it's by itself in a pot."

Schmidt also recommends native and adapted plants (those that naturally grow or thrive in your area without using a lot of resources, respectively): "Native plants are especially nice for outdoor leisure areas, because you're inviting in the local cycles of wildlife and a balanced local ecosystem, which means wonderful extras like singing birds, the sight of butterflies and nature's own methods of pest and disease management."

There's a native plant society for almost every state, she notes, and you can go to your state's page to learn more about native plants in your area.

Fuss-free foliage

Low-maintenance foliage can also soften and add character to outdoor living spaces.

"Going without flowers doesn't mean going without color," says Tesselaar. The colorfully foliated Tropicanna® cannas, which can handle wet feet, can be potted and set right into your favorite water features. And the dark-red, strap-like foliage of Festival™ Burgundy cordyline is so extremely drought tolerant and pest resistant, you'll wonder if it's real. Its basal-branching, low-growing structure allows for fuller, more compact clumps and a gentle fountain effect – perfect for containers or color blocking around your favorite outdoor living spots.

Festival, which is only hardy in Zones 7 or warmer, also overwinters beautifully as a houseplant, says Tesselaar: "So you can simply bring the patio pot in or out depending on the season, or replant it in the landscape year after year."

Schmidt loves the bright-red color of Japanese blood grass, along with other low-maintenance ornamental grasses like maiden grass (miscanthus – although it's considered invasive in some areas of the country), blue oatgrass, leatherleaf sedge, fountain grass and noninvasive dwarf or clumping bamboo. Favorites in other parts of the country include 'Elijah Blue' fescue, pampas grass (also invasive in some areas), Northern sea oats, blue panic grass, muhly grass (also extremely salt tolerant and prevents sand dune erosion) and little bluestem (hardy to Zone 3).

Then there are Schmidt's other foliage faves: phormiums (New Zealand flax), nassella (needlegrass) and Mexican feathergrass. Succulents, she adds, have exploded in popularity – in containers, hanging baskets and even as wall art.

Of course, the plants themselves aren't the only part of a low-maintenance landscape, say Schmidt and Tesselaar. There are also tips and tricks like mulching, grouping together plants with similar needs, efficient irrigation, reducing your lawn and maintaining healthy soil. But low-maintenance plants are a key ingredient.

"Some work in the garden is great if you enjoy it, but we all have tasks we'd rather not do," says Schmidt. "I know I'd rather be doing artful pruning, potting up containers and deadheading instead of weeding or mowing. The idea is to reduce or eliminate what feels like work so you're free to focus on what really matters to you."

Fact sheets

[Flower Carpet roses](#)

[Next Generation Flower Carpet roses](#)

[Storm series of agapanthus](#)

[Festival Burgundy cordyline](#)

Hi-res images

[Pink Flower Carpet roses and lavender, poolside](#)

[Festival Burgundy cordyline alongside deck, pool](#)

[Festival Burgundy cordyline underplanted with white lobelia in pot on formal patio](#)

[Tropicanna cannas by patio in water feature](#)

[Blue Storm agapanthus in landscape \(cordylines and phormiums to right\)](#)

[Blue Storm agapanthus in container](#)

Recent statistics

In the 2012 Residential Landscape Architecture Trends Survey conducted by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), a whopping 96.6 percent of

respondents rated low-maintenance landscapes as “somewhat or very in-demand” In particular, 85.4 percent of them had installed native or drought-tolerant plants in their outdoor living spaces.

The Winter 2011 survey on sustainable gardening by the Garden Writers Association Foundation showed similar results, with 58 percent already having reduced their watering (58 percent) and 35 percent adding more drought-tolerant plants.

At the same time, respondents in the ASLA survey stressed their love for outdoor leisure elements like grills (97.4 percent), pools (79.2 percent) and seating and dining areas (95.7 percent).

About Tesselaar

Tesselaar Plants searches the world and introduces new plants for the home garden, landscape, home décor and gift markets. Tesselaar undertakes extensive research and development of its varieties and, once they're selected for introduction, provides marketing and promotional support for them through its grower and retail network. Tesselaar carefully selects its licensed growers and purposefully keeps its portfolio of plants small by design, resulting in consistently high-quality, dramatic, prolific plants that are also environmentally friendly and exceptionally easy to grow.

The Tesselaar philosophy is to introduce exceptional plants while “making gardening easy” for everyone, and so it makes its products as widely available as possible. Tesselaar believes that the more gardeners there are, the better it is for everyone.

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Editor's note: Other images of low-maintenance plants cited in this release are available via the [Image Library](#) on Tesselaar's online [Newsroom](#).

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