

What to Plant When Water is Restricted?

By Scott Vogt, Executive Director/Horticulturist

If the well runs dry, we can't drink. If water is restricted, plants will suffer. Reservoirs are low and the Equus Beds Aquifer is shrinking but we continue to need water.

What happens when cities restrict water usage? What can we do to conserve water? What do homeowners and businesses do with the investments they have made in their landscapes?

These questions are not easy to solve, but choosing plants that require less water can be part of the answer. We can't continue to plant water-thirsty plants. Here are some of my favorite plants, available at our spring plant sale, for water-conscious gardeners:

1 Agastache 'Bolero' is a new long-blooming Hummingbird Mint with vivid rose-purple flower spikes from mid-summer into fall. Great for attracting pollinators to the landscape. They love sun and will flourish in spite of the heat.

2 *Amsonia hubrichtii* is one of the most under-used perennials at our plant sales. It provides three seasons of interest starting with blue star-like blooms in spring atop stems of narrow, dark, green leaves. It reaches 2-3 feet tall and 2-3 feet wide. In the fall, the entire plant turns a nice butter-yellow.

3 Grasses should be used more in the landscape. Try new forms of little bluestem 'Blue Heaven' or 'Standing Ovation'. They are upright, reach 3-4 feet, and turn burgundy red in the fall.

4 You can't go wrong with Butterfly Milkweed. The bright orange flowers make this the most recognizable wildflower on the prairie. It loves full sun and flourishes in dry conditions.

5 'Full Moon' Coreopsis is one of my favorite new plants. It blooms from May through October with huge 3" diameter flowers in shades of canary yellow. It can be grown in full sun or partial shade.

6 'Mercury Rising' Coreopsis is a truly hardy, red Coreopsis. The velvety-wine, red blooms keep coming all summer on plants that have a mounded habit. Plant them in full sun or partial shade.

7 Coneflowers should be in every native landscape. Choose *Echinacea pallida* for the long narrow drooping pink ray petals or **(8)** *Echinacea paradoxa* for the long, drooping, yellow ray petals. Each of these coneflowers can grow 3 feet tall and blooms in May and June. Give them plenty of sun and a medium to dry soil. Dark seed heads provide great off-season texture.



9 There are many great rose varieties to try, and I have had success with a rose called 'Home Run'. It has brick red flowers from May-October on plants that reach 3 feet tall and 3 feet wide. The foliage is disease-resistant, too.

10 If you need a vertical plant for the landscape, Panicum 'Northwind' is great. It is stiffly upright with blue-green foliage that develops airy panicles in the fall. Mature height is 4-5 feet.

11 This tame Ironweed, Vernonia 'Iron Butterflies' has narrow foliage topped with violet flowers in late summer. It is less than 2 feet tall and very resilient.

12 A great spring-blooming wildflower is Penstemon 'Dark Towers'. The tubular blooms are whitish-pink and attract many different pollinators. The purple-red foliage adds interest throughout the year. Plant them with Missouri Evening Primrose **(13)** for an attractive spring combination.

Try these compact asters for late season bloom. Aster KICKIN 'Lavender' **(14)**, 'Lilac Blue' **(15)**, and 'Pink Chiffon' **(16)** bloom from September into October. They each form bushy mounds 18-24 inches wide. Another excellent fall-blooming plant is the goldenrod Solidago 'Little Lemon' **(17)**.

18 *Silphium terebinthinaceum* has nice foliage and flowers with large leaves up to 2 feet long and a tall spike of yellow flowers in summer.

Larger pictures and detailed descriptions along with companion plants can be viewed on our Facebook page and Website.



A Cut and Paste Landscape

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Designing a new garden can be difficult. It takes time and inspiration to land on a design that beautifies your space. If you have seen a design that you like, note the appearance of the mature plants including size, form, and bloom times. For year-round interest, have plants that are coming into bloom and going out of bloom throughout the year. Consider plant combinations you like from the arboretum gardens and use them as a starting point to make your own design statement. The design below can be used as a model for your full-sun garden. The ultimate goal is plantings that are dynamic, aesthetically pleasing, and sustainable.

Please bring your ideas and questions to the upcoming Dyck Arboretum plant sale or attend one of the landscaping classes. At the sales or classes, staff, master gardeners, and volunteer gardeners will help you find the plants you want and advise you on plant combinations. We want you to be successful and help you choose the best plants to create your own sustainable landscape, to establish inviting habitats for birds and pollinators, and to reduce your water and chemical needs in the process.

