



## 'Top' Plants for Foliage (besides Ferns)

From Pat Curran

CCE Tompkins County

Relatively long-lived, excellent foliage interest (may or may not flower), not needing frequent division, disease/pest resistant, winter-hardy, won't spread too much

### Perennials for Sun

### Comments

- *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi* 'Vancouver Jade', bearberry; evergreen woody groundcover
- *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', feather reed grass ; vertical accent
- *Chasmanthium latifolium* 'River Mist', northern sea oats cultivar of native grass
- *Eryngium yuccifolium*, rattlesnake master needs good drainage; native
- *Eupatorium rugosum* 'Chocolate' cultivar of poisonous native
- *Geranium pratense* 'Dark Reiter', 'Midnight Reiter'; deadhead after flowering
- *Helicotrichon sempervirens* 'Sapphire', blue oat grass; durable smaller grass
- *Panicum virgatum* 'Dallas Blues', 'Heavy Metal', 'Prairie Fire', switch grass native
- *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln', dwarf fountain grass; more compact than species
- *Penstemon digitalis* 'Husker Red' maroon-leaved cultivar of native species
- *Salvia lyrata* 'Purple Knockout', lyre-leaf sage; cultivar of native species
- *Stachys byzantina*, lambs' ears hot humid weather may cause leaf disease
- *Veronica incana*, woolly speedwell needs good drainage
- *Yucca filamentosa* 'Color Guard' variegated cultivar of native species

### Perennials for Light Shade

### Comments

- *Arum italicum* 'Pictum' foliage dormant in summer; showy fruit
- *Asarum canadense*, native ginger deciduous groundcover; native
- *Asarum europaeum*, European ginger evergreen groundcover
- *Carex morrowii* 'Ice Dance', sedge grasslike plant spreads in shade
- *Geranium phaeum* 'Samobor' comes true from seed
- *Hakonechloa macra* 'Aureola', 'All Gold' ornamental grasses for protected sites
- *Helleborus foetidus*, bearsfoot hellebore may self-sow; green flowers
- *Heuchera* 'Green Spice', 'Amethyst Mist' watch out for frost-heaving
- *Lamium* 'Purple Dragon', 'Pink Pewter', deadnettle ; showy groundcovers
- *Ligularia dentata* 'Britt-Marie Crawford' needs it moist or even wet
- *Pachysandra procumbens*, Allegheny spurge; deciduous groundcover, native
- *Paxistima canbyi*, cliff green small native evergreen shrub
- *Polygonatum odoratum* 'Variegatum', cream-edged Solomon's seal; deer problem
- *Syneilesis aconitifolia*, shredded umbrella plant; weird foliage; forms colonies
- *Waldsteinia fragarioides*, barren strawberry native deciduous groundcover

### **Reference:**

Herbaceous Perennial Plants, Third Edition, by Allan M. Armitage

Perennials for American Gardens by Ruth Rogers Clausen and Nicolas H. Ekstrom

The Well-Tended Perennial Garden: Planting & Pruning Techniques, by Tracy DiSabato-Aust



Cornell University  
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**Learn more:**

Cornell Bluegrass Lane perennial research:

[http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/cornell\\_herbaceous/](http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/cornell_herbaceous/)

Missouri Botanic Garden Plant Finder (over 6800 plants):

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plantfinder/plantfindersearch.aspx>

Garden Guidance

[www.gardening.cornell.edu](http://www.gardening.cornell.edu)

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