

STATE-BY-STATE
GARDENING

OHIO GARDENER

OHIO'S OWN GUIDE TO GREAT GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

More Than Mums

*10 Late-Blooming
Perennials*

**EASY FALL
CONTAINERS**

September/October

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**NOW FOR A MORE
COLORFUL SPRING**

Sustainability: Right Plant, Right Place

A sustainable garden is a plant community that takes care of itself. By using the right plants in the right place, you can have a low- or no-maintenance landscape that is also eco-friendly.

A sustainable landscape is more than just pretty exterior decoration. It should be self-perpetuating — the goal is to create a plant community that becomes easier to care for as it matures.

By selecting the right plant for the right place you can reduce the need for water, fertilizer, pesticides and labor. You can prevent soil erosion, influence a household's summer cooling and winter heating needs and feed beneficial insects and wildlife.

However, choosing plants can be just as daunting a task as picking out new carpet or paint. Consider plants that are native, but keep in mind that many non-natives are suitable for sustainable landscapes, too. The key is to look for plants that are not invasive, adapt to a range of growing conditions and provide habitat for wildlife.

Recommendations from a Local Favorite

The Phipps Conservatory in Pittsburgh publishes a yearly "Top 10 Sustainable Plants" list. Many of their choices are located in their Outdoor Garden so visitors can experience them in a natural environment.

Phipps lists the following plants for 2011: red hot poker, blackberry lily, Lenten rose, variegated Solomon's seal, 'Little Bunny' fountain grass, plume grass, Virginia sweetspire, oakleaf hydrangea, American yellowwood and river birch.

My favorite on this list is Lenten rose, also known as hellebore. Hellebores often flower through the snow and ice, plus they are shade and deer resistant. The Winter Jewels™ Group includes some spectacular choices. I like 'Amber Gem' with its double-yellow blooms blushed red giving it an apricot tone. 'Peppermint Ice' has large, double, light-pink blooms with a dark pink edging.

Paperbark maple is a small-sized tree Phipps recommended in 2009. Gingerbread® is an Ohio-bred cross (*Acer griseum* x *nikoense*) with cinnamon-colored, vertically peeling, exfoliating bark. It reaches 25 to 30 feet in height, 15 to 20 feet in spread and has brilliant orangey-red fall color.



Top: Gingerbread® paperbark maple provides brilliant orangey-red fall foliage. Above: Unlike the species, Gingerbread® paperbark maple's bark exfoliates vertically instead of horizontally providing another element of interest in your eco-friendly landscape. Far left: *Helleborus* 'Amber Gem'. Left: *Helleborus* 'Peppermint Ice'.





The Perennial that Keeps on Giving

To me, daylilies are a perfect perennial — they are extremely low maintenance and can tolerate salt spray. They are great interplanted with daffodils; the daffs come up in the spring and when they're done, up come the daylilies. There are many to choose from, but you can't go wrong with repeat bloomers 'Stella d'Oro' or 'Black Eyed Stella'. Or try the new Kokomo Sunset™ from Garden Debut®. Additionally, stoloniferous daylilies (those that send out runners that root) like 'Fulva' and 'Kwanson' are great for erosion control.

You Can Go With This, Or You Can Go With That

Spring holidays are synonymous with Florida dogwoods. But this native tends to succumb to anthracnose. A disease-free alternative are the Chinese dogwoods (*Comus kousa chinensis*). Two improved cultivars out of 'Milky Way' are Galilean®, whose leaves are twice the size of the species, and Samaritan®, which boasts cream-and-green variegated foliage that turns shades of pink and burgundy in autumn. Both have white flowers and strawberry-like fruit that birds love.

Top left and inset: Daylily 'Stella d'Oro'. Above: Chinese dogwoods can be a disease-free alternative to native dogwoods. Samaritan® is as hardy as Florida dogwoods but has unique cream and green variegated foliage that takes on pink and burgundy hues in the fall.



Left: Misaka® Itoh peony is disease resistant and heat tolerant. Perhaps best of all is that it features a higher-than-average number of secondary buds, which means a heavier amount of blooms to enjoy. Above: Fruit from viburnums (*V. dentatum*), such as the selected native Blue Blaze™ of the American Beauties™ native plant program, are highly attractive to wildlife.

The Best of Both Worlds

A horticultural breakthrough, Itoh peonies are a cross between tree and herbaceous peonies. They have a domed, vigorous growth habit, large double flowers and lacy, dark green foliage and are winter dormant. Itoh peonies can have up to 50 blooms in a single season.

The newest Itoh peonies for 2011 include Takara™ (meaning “treasure”). When its 6-inch flowers open they appear mostly pink but are actually light yellow flushed with deep lavender pink. As blooms mature, the pink and yellow fade to white tinged with pink and a dark burgundy flare in the center. Misaka™ (meaning “beautiful blossom”) flowers appear orange but lighten to a peachy-yellow contrasted with dark-red, prominent central flares. Both prefer full sun.

Thoughts From A Greening Expert

National Gardening Association urban gardening expert William Moss suggests hyssop (*Hyssopus officinalis*) as one of his sustainable go-to plants. A hardy substitute for rosemary, it is maintenance free. Hyssop is excellent for attracting butterflies, hummingbirds and bees. He suggests harvesting frequently and cutting spent flowers for more blooms.

William also likes ‘Regent’ serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia* ‘Regent’). He feels it has all the attributes: native, drought tolerant, disease and pest resistant, hardy, a wildlife attractor and three seasons of interest. It is trouble free and produces an abundance of sweet, dark-purple berries. He has used them in ground at his community garden and in containers on his Chicago rooftop.

In the end, thoughtful plant selection combined with proper site preparation can create a uniquely diverse sustainable landscape that as the Phipps Conservatory says, “is low on maintenance but high on enjoyment!”

Maria Zampini is the owner of Lake County New Plants LLC, which markets and licenses LCN Selections new plant introductions. She is a featured writer and columnist in consumer magazines and horticultural trade journals as well as a nationally known speaker on plant patents, trademarks and new plant introductions. Visit her website at www.growingwithzampini.com.

Lawn Grasses Are Plants, Too!

Besides being a place for family activities, lawns provide many environmental benefits such as erosion control, providing oxygen while capturing greenhouse gases and filtering dust and dirt from the air. Grass also moderates temperatures, and helps reduce noise, glare and pest populations. Follow these lawn-care tips:

- **Mow high.** This encourages deeper root growth. Tall grass also shades the soil surface reducing evaporation and preventing weed seed germination.
- **Mulch grass clippings.** Leave clippings on the lawn to return nutrients back to the soil. Adding back organic matter improves soil structure and promotes earthworm activity and microbe growth.
- **Clean up.** Keep grass clippings and leaves on the lawn, off the street and out of storm drains. Clippings and leaves contain nutrients that can be washed into streams and rivers.
- **Conserve water.** Allow your lawn to go dormant over the summer months.