



Figure 2. Height of seven wild populations of perennials collected from an Illinois prairie. Values are means of 5 replications.

The significant increase in germination of purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, and lamb's ear between the MM500 test and the petri dish test may be due to damping off of seedlings in the MM500 test. Cool night temperatures (<20°C), long nights, and a continuously moist media are favorable conditions that predispose plants to the root rot *Pythium* (Powell and Lindquist, 1992).

All of the perennials, except lamb's ear, grew well. This is in agreement with Brown et al. (1996) and Black and Gilman (1997) who reported that purple coneflower, blanket flower, Mexican hat, and black-eyed Susan grow well in full sun in southern Florida. We suspect that the decline of lamb's ear probably resulted from excessively wet conditions. The total rainfall at the University of Florida Fort Lauderdale REC for June 1997 and July 1997 was 32.05 and 24.18 cm, respectively. Lamb's ear requires well-drained soil and subirrigation is recommended because the foliage is hairy and retains moisture which may cause leaf disease (Armitage, 1989).

The lack of flowering of yellow coneflower, prairie bergamot, and blanket flower could be the result of low light levels

because these varieties require full sun (Armitage, 1989). However, many perennials will not flower the first year after they are planted.

## Conclusions

This project was conducted to determine if perennial seeds collected in Illinois would germinate and grow in southern Florida. Our results are in agreement with other researchers that purple coneflower, blanket flower, Mexican hat, and black-eyed Susan will grow and eventually flower in southern Florida. Yellow coneflower and prairie bergamot also grew well and have the potential for use in southern Florida. However, we would not recommend planting lamb's ear in southern Florida due to high rainfall and humidity that could lead to potential plant loss.

## Acknowledgments

This research could not have taken place without the generosity of Norma and Kent Elliot and The Prairie Patch (Niantic, IL) who provided the perennial seeds. The authors are also grateful to Maria Bravo for her technical assistance.

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## FLOWERING PERENNIALS FOR SOUTHERN FLORIDA—AN UNDERUTILIZED RESOURCE FOR THE LANDSCAPE

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**Abstract.** Perennial plants were evaluated for their ability to survive in south Florida under typical environmental conditions. Included are recommendations for culture and habit for vari-

ous types of perennial flowering shrubs. Recognized in the subtropics are three distinct type of perennial growth habits, evergreen, perennial and bipennial. This distinction will assist homeowners and landscape professionals to better select the proper perennial plants for various situations.

## Introduction

A perennial plant is defined with specific connotations in areas with distinct seasonal fluctuations characterized by change in temperature, sunlight and moisture. However, in the tropical and subtropical regions of the continental United States the

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seasons are often less distinct due the evergreen nature of many subtropical plants. With this, the traditional perennial (in foliage and flower during the growing season and foliage or flower die back during the dormant season) is often forgotten.

With the arrival of new and partial year residents and tourists in Florida, the expectation of floriferous and instant color Florida is amplified. In the past this demand has been met with expensive plantings of primarily annual plants.

However, with the ascent of environmental concerns, many residents and establishments would like to reduce the labor, fertilizer, water and costs associated with continual replacement of annual plantings. Low maintenance plants with longer life spans, reduced care requirements and minimal long term expenses are often preferable.

The selection of perennials available for south Florida is wide and varied. Underutilization of perennials in the semitropics often arises because of limited knowledge of application of tropical perennials, not a lack of selection.

In South Florida's version of a perennial garden, the gardener must consider that in most cases the plant will be present all year and not lose its foliage with the onset of cool weather. In the tropical and subtropical regions of South Florida perennial plants fall into three distinct categories as defined by maintenance requirements in the landscape. These categories are defined by their growth habits: 1. plants with persistent foliage through the year (properennial); 2. plants with foliage present only a portion of the year yet foliage regrows each year either prior to or after flowering (perennial); and 3. herbaceous plants which persist for consecutive years but after consecutive growing season plants perish or become unsightly (biperennial). These terms have been designated to facilitate a greater understanding of the nature of the plants for the nursery, landscape and homeowner industry. These terms are not absolute and may be effected by the location in the landscape and environmental conditions encountered throughout the life of the plants.

#### Materials and Methods

The following information has been gathered from 6 years of trials at the Flowering Plant Trial Gardens in Mounts Botanical Garden, West Palm Beach, FL through professional consultant observations by the author in south Florida and Palm Beach County.

The following cultural requirements are recommended due to experiences specific to Palm Beach County, FL. Average conditions consist of yearly rainfall exceeding 60 inches, and sandy alkaline soil with a pH range of 7.8-8.5. Wherever possible, use 3-4 inches of appropriate organic mulch to help retain soil moisture and fertilizer and to suppress weeds. Low volume, drip type irrigation systems are also encouraged because, in addition to conserving water by placing it directly where needed, drip systems help minimize foliar wetting which can add to disease problems.

#### Discussion

All plants in this list are considered excellent choices for traditional perennial type gardens in south Florida, as per the identified cultural requirements (Table 1). Anyone wishing to grow these plants can use the information as a guideline to a successful tropical "type" perennial flower garden anywhere. The terminology was chosen to assist the homeowner and landscape designer to have the greatest success in growing perennials in south Florida. Table 2 has a selection of water garden species for south Florida.

Table 1. South Florida perennial plant list.

Botanical: <i>Acalypha hispida</i> repens Common: Trailing Chenille Plant Flower color: red Flower Season: all year Height: 0.5 ft Growth Habit: prostrate, spreading Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full to partial sun, avoid foliar wetting* Type: properennial
Botanical: <i>Asclepias curassavica</i> Common: Yellow Milkweed Flower color: yellow Flower Season: all year Height: 3 ft Growth Habit: upright, sparse with age, regular trimming, reseeds Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun Type: biperennial
Botanical: <i>Barleria cristata</i> Common: Philippine Violet Flower color: blue Flower Season: fall, winter, spring Height: 4-6 ft Growth Habit: upright, reseeds Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun to part shade, prefers regular watering, over watering causes excessive weak growth Type: properennial
Botanical: <i>Barleria repens</i> Common: Creeping Philippine Violet Flower color: coral, salmon Flower Season: fall, winter Height: 1ft Growth Habit: prostrate Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, sun to light shade Type: properennial
Botanical: <i>Buddelia madagascariensis</i> Common: Yellow Butterfly Bush Flower color: yellow Flower Season: winter Height: 5 ft Growth Habit: upright, weeping, silver-green leaves Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun Type: properennial
Botanical: <i>Crotalaria retusa</i> Common: Rattle Box Flower color: orange-red Flower Season: fall Height: 8 ft Growth Habit: upright Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun Type: properennial
Botanical: <i>Epidendron ibaguense</i> Common: Reed Orchid Flower color: orange/red/yellow Flower Season: sporadically spring, summer Height: 2-3 ft Growth Habit: upright, loose, excellent pot plant

\*Organics: addition of organic material to sandy soil by mulching reduces water loss for many of the previous plants are shallow rooted. The addition of organic mulch also reduces the risk of nutritional deficiencies through the process of decomposition and acidification of South Florida's sandy and rocky soils.

†Avoid foliar wetting: recommended procedure of culture is to minimize leaf wetting, plants with this designation have the tendency to have leaf rot with the introduction of overhead applications of water. It is recommended that drip or under mulch irrigation be used for best appearance and health of the plant. Avoid foliar wetting: is specified for plant material which is prone to fungal leaf spot by irrigation wetting foliage. As a general rule if the leaf surface of a plant is silver in color and/or hairy these plants will react poorly to irrigation by means of overhead watering.

Table 1. (Continued) South Florida perennial plant list.

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Cultural requirements: full sun, organics<sup>1</sup>, fertilize regularly  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Erthrina herbacea*  
Common: Coral Bean  
Flower color: red  
Flower Season: spring  
Height: 10 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, attractive foliage  
Cultural requirements: full sun in moist locations areas, partial sun in dry locations, organics<sup>1</sup>  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Eucharis amazonica*  
Common: Amazon Lily  
Flower color: white  
Flower Season: summer  
Height: 1.5 ft  
Growth Habit: clumping, attractive foliage  
Cultural requirements: not tolerant of drought, moderate sun to shade, moist  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Globba winitii*  
Common: Dancing Dragon Ginger  
Flower color: white, purple  
Flower: spring, summer  
Height: 2 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, clumping  
Cultural requirements: partial sun, understory, organics<sup>1</sup>, even moisture  
Type: perennial

Botanical: *Gypsophylum sp.*  
Common: Summer Aster  
Flower color: white  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 1.5 ft  
Growth Habit: prostrate, mounding, flowers resemble daisies  
Cultural requirements: drought tolerant  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Hamelia cuprea*  
Common: Bahamian Firebush  
Flower color: yellow and orange  
Flower Season: spring, summer, fall  
Height: unknown  
Growth Habit: upright, left untrimmed may become a small tree (20ft)  
Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Hamelia patens*  
Common: Dwarf Fire Bush  
Flower color: yellow and red  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 5 ft  
Growth Habit: up right spreading branches in tiers  
Cultural requirements: full to part sun, prefers some moisture for best appearance  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Jacquemontia taminifolia*  
Common: Jacquemontia  
Flower color: blue

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<sup>2</sup>Avoid foliar wetting: recommended procedure of culture is to minimize leaf wetting, plants with this designation have the tendency to have leaf rot with the introduction of overhead applications of water. It is recommended that drip or under mulch irrigation be used for best appearance and health of the plant. Avoid foliar wetting: is specified for plant material which is prone to fungal leaf spot by irrigation wetting foliage. As a general rule if the leaf surface of a plant is silver in color and/or hairy these plants will react poorly to irrigation by means of overhead watering.

Table 1. (Continued) South Florida perennial plant list.

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Flower Season: fall, winter, spring  
Height: n/a  
Growth Habit: vine, sprawling, moderate growth 15 ft in a yr  
Cultural requirements: full sun  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Kaempferia* spp.  
Common: Peacock Ginger, Resurrection Lily  
Flower color: white, blue, pink  
Flower Season: spring  
Height: 1.5 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, clumping, often have subtle colored leaves  
Cultural requirements: partial sun, understory, organics<sup>1</sup>  
Type: perennial

Botanical: *Loropetalum chinense rubrum* 'Monraz'  
Common: Razzleberry  
Flower color: pink-red  
Flower Season: spring, fall  
Height: 3 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, bushy, reddish colored foliage  
Cultural requirements: full sun to partial sun  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Medinella magnifica*  
Common: none  
Flower color: pink-purple  
Flower Season: summer, fall  
Height: 4 ft  
Growth Habit: upright  
Cultural requirements: partial sun, epiphytic, planted in the landscape requires regular water and fertilizer  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Megaskepasma erythrochlamys*  
Common: Brazilian Red-Cloak  
Flower color: red  
Flower Season: summer, fall, winter  
Height: 6 ft  
Growth Habit: upright  
Cultural requirements sun to partial shade, organics<sup>1</sup>  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Odontonema strictum*  
Common: Firespike  
Flower color: red  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 5 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, spreads by root suckers  
Cultural requirements: full sun, moist/partial sun to shade may be kept drier, organics<sup>1</sup>  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Otacanthus caeruleus*  
Common: Brazilian Snapdragon  
Flower color: blue with white throat  
Flower Season: spring, summer, fall  
Height: 2 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, clumping  
Cultural requirements: full sun, minimize overhead watering  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Pereskia bleo*  
Common: Leaf Cactus

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Table 1. (Continued) South Florida perennial plant list.

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Flower color: orange/rose  
 Flower Season: spring, summer  
 Height: 8-10 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, sprawling, large spines  
 Cultural requirements: full sun  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Phaius tankervilleae*  
 Common: Nun's Orchid  
 Flower color: white with burgundy throat  
 Flower Season: spring  
 Height: 4 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, clumping  
 Cultural requirements: full sun evenly moist soil, well drained, organics'  
 Type: perennial

Botanical: *Plectranthus eakanus*  
 Common: Purple Spur Flower  
 Flower color: metallic light purple  
 Flower Season: summer, fall  
 Height: 4.5 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, bushy, loose  
 Cultural requirements: partial sun, moisture, organics', fertilize regularly  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Plumbago scandens*  
 Common: Leadwort, Native Plumbago  
 Flower color: white  
 Flower Season: fall, winter  
 Height: 3 ft  
 Growth Habit: prostrate, sprawling  
 Cultural requirements: full sun to shade, maintains dense growth with increased sunlight  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Ratibida columnifera*  
 Common: Mexican Hat  
 Flower color: yellow-red  
 Flower Season: fall, winter, spring  
 Height: 1.5-2.5 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright  
 Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun, avoid foliar wetting'  
 Type: bipennial

Botanical: *Ruellia brittoniana*  
 Common: Dwarf Ruellia 'Katie'  
 Flower color: blue  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 1.5 ft  
 Growth Habit: clumping, reseeds  
 Cultural requirements: not selective, sun to shade, flowering reduced with onset of cool temperatures  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Ruellia graecizans*  
 Common: none  
 Flower color: red  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 2 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright  
 Cultural requirements: moist, light sun to shade, organics', understory  
 Type: properennial

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Table 1. (Continued) South Florida perennial plant list.

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Botanical: *Ruellia squarrosa*  
 Common: none  
 Flower color: light blue  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 1ft  
 Growth Habit: prostrate  
 Cultural requirements: not selective, full sun to part shade  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Salvia coccinea*  
 Common: Scarlet Sage  
 Flower color: red, white, pink  
 Flower season: all year  
 Height: 2 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright; reseeds  
 Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun  
 Type: bipennial

Botanical: *Salvia guaranitica*  
 Common: Sapphire Sage  
 Flower color: dark blue  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 4 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, woody with age  
 Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, organics', full sun  
 Type: bipennial

Botanical: *Salvia involucrata*  
 Common: Rose Leaf Sage  
 Flower color: rose-pink  
 Flower Season: fall, winter  
 Height: 4 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, sparse with age  
 Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun  
 Type: properennial

Botanical: *Salvia leucantha*  
 Common: Mexican Sage  
 Flower color: purple-white  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 2-4 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, spreading, clumps, regular pruning of old canes improves plant appearance  
 Cultural requirements: sun, avoid foliar wetting'  
 Type: bipennial

Botanical: *Salvia madrensis*  
 Common: Forsythia Salvia  
 Flower color: yellow  
 Flower Season: fall, winter, spring  
 Height: 4-6 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, spreading by root suckers  
 Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, regular fertilizer, organics', full sun to light shade  
 Type: bipennial

Botanical: *Salvia miniata*  
 Common: Belize Sage  
 Flower color: red  
 Flower Season: all year  
 Height: 3-4 ft  
 Growth Habit: upright, full

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Table 1. (Continued) South Florida perennial plant list.

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Cultural requirements: regular water, organics', full sun to shade  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Salvia uliginosa*  
Common: Bog Salvia  
Flower color: blue with white throat  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 3 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, spreading by underground stems, may be invasive  
Cultural requirements: full sun, moist  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Salvia vanhouttei*  
Common: Vanhouttei's Sage  
Flower color: dark red, burgundy  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 4 ft  
Growth Habit: upright,  
Cultural requirements: sun to shade, prefer moist areas, organics'  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Senna polyfillum*  
Common: Desert Cassia  
Flower color: yellow  
Flower Season: fall, winter, spring  
Height: 8 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, tree like, excellent container plant  
Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, full sun  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Spathoglottis plicata*  
Common: Ground Orchid  
Flower color: blue, white, purple or yellow  
Flower Season: summer  
Height: 1.5 ft  
Growth Habit: clumping, attractive foliage  
Cultural requirements: full sun to shade, regular watering, prefers not to dry out  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Strobilanthes dyeranus*  
Common: Persian Shield  
Flower color: blue  
Flower Season: n/a  
Height: 3 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, shrubby grown for purple/silver iridescent foliage  
Cultural requirements: dry to moist/never wet, organics', partial sun to shade  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Tacca chantrieri*  
Common: Bat Plant  
Flower color: black  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 3 ft  
Growth Habit: upright clumping  
Cultural requirements: partial sun to shade, understory, even moisture to wet but not standing water, do not let dry out  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Tagetes lucida*  
Common: Mexican Tarragon  
Flower color: yellow  
Flower season: fall, winter

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Height: 1.5 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, sprawling  
Cultural requirements: sun to partial sun, drought tolerant  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Tibouchina grandifolia*  
Common: Tibouchina  
Flower color: purple  
Flower Season: winter, spring, summer  
Height: 10 ft  
Growth Habit: upright  
Cultural requirements: full sun, even moisture  
Type: properennial

Botanical: *Turnea subulata*  
Common: White Alder  
Flower color: white with dark purple center  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 2 ft  
Growth Habit: prostrate, spreading  
Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, regular water, fertilize, nutrient deficiencies with over watering  
Type: biperennial

Botanical: *Verbena maritima*  
Common: Beach Verbena  
Flower color: light blue-purple  
Flower Season: spring, summer  
Height: 1 ft  
Growth Habit: prostrate, spreading  
Cultural requirements: drought, salt tolerant, avoid foliar wetting'  
Type: Biperennial

Botanical: *Zinnia angustifolia*  
Common: Dwarf Zinnia, Creeping Zinnia  
Flower color: white  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: 1 ft  
Growth Habit: upright, spreading  
Cultural requirements: drought tolerant, minimize overhead watering  
Type: biperennial

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Table 2. Aquatic perennials for water gardens.

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Botanical: *Nymphaea* 'Dauben'  
Common: Tropical Water Lily 'Dauben'  
Flower color: white/pale blue  
Flower Season: all year  
Height: n/a  
Growth Habit: spreading, leaf pads up to 1.5 ft in width  
Cultural requirements: full to part sun, may flower all year with regular fertilization  
Type: perennial

Botanical: *Nymphaea* 'Gene Joyner'  
Common: Tropical Water Lily 'Gene Joyner'  
Flower color: white with blue cast  
Flower Season: spring, summer, fall  
Height: n/a  
Growth Habit: spreading, leaf pads up to 3 ft in width  
Cultural requirements: full sun  
Type: perennial

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