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Heat Loving Flowers for the Summer Garden, Part II (Perennials)

I've covered some great annuals for fresh color, but now it's time to roll out the perennials. I favor perennials because I don't like to replant my flowers each year. I have enough to do with all the vegetables! I will occasionally throw a few annuals in to brighten things up as my perennial beds take a little longer to get going. The majority of perennial flowers die back in the winter but come back year after year, bigger and more glorious than the year before. Drum roll please...

Perennials for the Sunny Side of Life (Full Sun)

- **Blanket Flower** (*Gaillardia grandiflora*) is a no-fuss member of the sunflower family. Bright and cheery, in yellow, red and orange shades, it's sure to brighten up any garden. Gaillardias grow in spreading clumps and reach 2-3 feet in height. It comes in single or double flower varieties and can be solid or bi-colored.
- **Bush Daisy** (*Euryops pectinatus*) will grow 4-6 feet tall if left unchecked. This hardy plant produces bright yellow daisy-like flowers for most of the year. Once established, it is very drought tolerant. Bush daisy can be shaped into a patio tree, kept smaller as a bush, whatever your preference. It should be trimmed in the early spring to keep it from getting leggy and to keep it blooming profusely.
- **Carnation/Sweet William** (*Dianthus* sp.) are beautiful, hardy cinnamon scented flowers. They grow anywhere from 2 inches to 3 feet tall in spreading clumps. Available in white, pink, red, yellow, purple and many more colors, including bi-colored varieties. Clumps can be easily divided to produce new plants and rejuvenate plants that are no longer producing many flowers.

- **Garden Penstemon** (*Penstemon gloxinoides*) has large trumpet-shaped flowers. Garden Penstemon grows 12 inches to 3-4 feet tall, and clumps grow 1-3 feet around. Available in orange, pink, purple, red, white and bi-colors, this drought tolerant flower just keeps on going. Hummingbirds love it!
- **Lavender** (*Lavandula* sp.) comes in many different varieties. I recommend non-English varieties for Tucson. Spanish, Sweet, Goodwin Creek, Provence and Woolly lavender all do well here. Once established, they are very drought tolerant. Lavender has silvery green foliage, with flower spikes ranging from pale lavender to deep purple in color. The flowers can be used as decoration, for teas, in sachets, in food or other beverages. Lavender is great for attracting pollinators to your yard. Ranging from 4 inches to 2 feet or so in height and spread, available in trailing or upright varieties, there is sure to be one that catches your fancy!
- **Mexican Heather** (*Cuphea hyssopifolia*) is a fast growing shrub-like plant with little purple flowers. Mature size is around 2 feet in height and 2 feet wide. It is a wonderfully versatile plant, easily trimmed and shaped to provide a formal accent in a garden bed or in a container.
- **Moss Rose** (*Portulaca grandiflora*) is a charming little trailing plant which can be used as a groundcover or in windowboxes and containers. The flower resembles a rose, hence the name. Moss Rose is available in many colors like red, yellow, orange, pink, white, etc. The average height of the plant is 4 to 8 inches and it spreads from 6 to 18 inches in width. If they get leggy or scraggly, just cut them back and they'll get nice and full again.
- **Pincushion Flower** (*Scabiosa* sp.) the perennial varieties (there are other varieties that are annual) are available in a variety of colors such as white, light blue, lavender, or crimson, atop long slender stalks. The green-gray clumping foliage grows about 12-16 inches in height and up to two feet or more in diameter. Drought tolerant, this pretty flower attracts butterflies and hummingbirds.
- **Treasure Flower** (*Gazania splendens*) grows 6-12 inches in height and spread. Available in yellow, orange, red, and pink, you can also find it in bi-colors with rings or stripes. A hard-working sun lover, this plant is equally happy in garden beds or containers, blooming all summer long. You have to love a flower with 'zany' right in the name...
- **Verbena** (*Verbena* sp.) is wonderful for hanging baskets, containers and gardens. Available in a variety of colors such as red, peach, purple, and pink, verbena can also be found as an upright bushy type, trailing varieties, and clumping varieties with flowers growing up tall slender stems. Verbena takes both heat and cold and spreads readily.
- **Whirling Butterflies** (*Gaura* aka *Oenothera lindheimeri*) is another clumping perennial. Growing 18-24 inches tall with a spread of 24-36 inches, this drought

tolerant flower brings a unique look to the garden. Available in white or shades of pink, small flowers dance and sway atop slender stems in the slightest breeze, hence the name 'Whirling Butterflies'.

- **Yarrow** (*Achillea millefolium*) is a drought tolerant perennial. Clumps of tiny blooms appear on long slender stems that rise up from silver gray feathery foliage. Available in white, yellow, pink and red. Yarrow makes a great dried flower as well!

On the Shadier Side (Morning Sun Only)

- **Bugleweed** (*Ajuga reptans*) is a low-growing perennial often used as a groundcover. 6-10 inch spikes topped by purple flowers make a wonderful carpet for shady areas. Prefers to be kept moist, but if properly watered takes a fair amount of sun. Protect from afternoon sun.
- **Columbine** (*Aquilegia* sp.) encompasses a huge variety of sizes, colors, and is available in single or double varieties as well. 12-30 inches tall, depending on variety, this flower will draw in the hummingbirds, the bees AND the butterflies. Columbines like dappled shade or sun, but be sure to plant it where it will have protection from afternoon sun. Keep well-watered, as Columbines do not like to dry out.
- **Coral Bells** (*Heuchera* sp.) has gorgeous pink to red flowers. However, the real draw is the foliage. Coral Bells are available in a wide range of shades and colors. Brighten up that shady spot with a spot of lime or a bright coral. Add depth with a dark purple, or define an area with a solid-leafed variety with white edging. The combinations are endless! Coral Bells grow 8-12 inches tall and can spread out from 1-2 feet. Plant where it will receive morning sun or dappled shade. Mulch heavily, as Coral Bells tend to develop shallow root systems. Keep moist.
- **Gerbera Daisy** (*Gerbera* sp.) is a slow growing perennial with large showy flowers. Growing up to 1 foot high and 1 foot wide, the Gerbera blooms best when nighttime temperatures are cool. Plant in a shaded location and keep moist. A solid bloomer for spring and fall. Available in white, yellow, orange, red and shades in between.
- **Pentas** (*Pentas lanceolata*) is a butterfly favorite. Hummingbirds like it too. Pentas blooms pretty much all summer long, with star-shaped flowers in shades of white, pink, purple and red. Prefers to have moist soil and morning sun, however, offer protection from afternoon rays or the leaves will burn. Great for containers or garden beds.

This should give you a good place to start. If you put the right plants in the right spot, your garden will reward you! Happy Planting!