

Drought-Resistant Plants for Pots



CONTAINER GARDENS : There are certain plant characteristics that indicate drought tolerance:

- Silvery leaves and hairy or fuzzy leaves reflect sunlight thus reducing water loss
- Leaf hairs also act as a physical barrier to evaporation by reducing air movement over the leaf's surface
- Succulent plants like Portulaca store water
- A waxy coating slows the loss of water through the leaf surface (Ivy-leaved Geranium)
- A taproot is another excellent water storage device (Butterfly Weed)

DROUGHT TOLERANT PLANTS: Generally plants grown in containers are more exposed to the elements and should be considered less hardy than the same plants in the ground. These are just a few plants suggestions.

- 1) Perennials - Flax, Coneflower (Echinacea), Butterfly Weed, Lantana, Sunflower, Marguerite, Ivy-leaved Geranium, certain grasses, and small Junipers
- 2) Annuals - Zinnia, Morning Glory, Impatiens (does well, but needs water), Clematis, Nasturtiums, Marigolds, Rose Moss, Geraniums, Sunflowers
- 3) Bulbs - Snowdrop received the most votes for an early blooming bulb, it goes dormant in mid-spring, Bearded iris, tulips, Onions, Crocus
- 4) Small Shrubs - Spirea, Oregon Grape, Japanese Holly
- 5) Ornamental Grasses - Feather Reed Grass, Big Blue Stem, Maiden Grass, Tufted Fescue, Fountain Grass

TIPS: Consider where the pots are to be placed, For example a spot in the sun can be 20 degrees hotter than a nearby spot in the shade, so put the most drought tolerant plants in the most exposed places.

- Group plants with similar water requirements in the same container, this will reduce water waste and improve the plants health since they will only receive what they need.
- For a few water loving favorites, group them in the shade.
- Use a potting soil mix that is quick draining, water retentive, and nutrient rich.

Consider adding an inorganic soil conditioner to the mix. For example hydrogels hold several times their weight in water and release it gradually. One teaspoon absorbs one quart of water.

- Mycorrhizal fungi improve the ability of a plant to take up water and nutrients by working with the plant's root system. Packets combined with hydrogels, soil conditioners, and bio-stimulants are available commercially and should be added to the soil before planting.