

FOLIAGE FEVER

Let's face facts...the majority of perennials will not bloom longer than three weeks. But the foliage remains and we want to make sure that it is eye-catching. We often purchase perennials in bloom and forget to imagine the perennial without the bloom. The foliage is the main ingredient for an attractive all season interest garden.

I admit that I am a foliage fanatic...silver, blue and chartreuse...whatever the colour as long as it is unique and visually attractive. If the foliage colour changes from one season to the next, I will often be more likely to purchase it. I especially love when the foliage colour turns red or orange in the fall.

Foliage adds visual interest, colour, fragrance, texture and even sound to every season in your garden. A number of ornamental grasses have wonderful four season interest without flowering and add a gentle rustling sound to your garden.

Perennials with Unique Foliage

There are exceptional new and old varieties of hostas that have peaked my attention this year: Hosta 'Halycon' for its marvelous blue colouring and Hosta 'Cherry Berry' which has stunning red seed pods in the fall as well as red petioles (lower stalk supporting leaf). Listed as the perennial of 2004, the Japanese Painted Fern (*Athyrium niponicum 'Pictum'*) will brighten up a moist shade spot with its metallic colour and lovely red sheen.

For the sun garden, there are a number of favourites for foliage lovers. The perennial geranium is a long blooming, hardy selection. The 'Roxanne' Geranium has fragrant leaves, two to three months of magenta flowers and foliage that turns red in the fall.

Iris pallida 'Albovariegata' makes an attractive specimen perennial in a border with its lovely stripes of bright green and gold.

After the lavender blue flowers disappear in

the spring, you will look forward to the striking striped foliage in your perennial bed.

For a part sun location, try planting Heuchera 'Stormy Seas.' This lovely perennial has unique dark purple foliage with creamy pink flowers contrasting well with chartreuse coloured hostas.

Remember the foliage will outlast the flower display. Be selective. Demand maximum seasonal interest from the foliage of your plants. Consider blooms as an added bonus.

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