

Perennial Border Plants

Perennials are plants that come back every year – so you can enjoy them in the garden for many years (even generations!). Most of them are at their best in the summer months but you can have different perennials in flower throughout the year. Virtually all them die down for the winter months, but they do come up again every spring. Traditionally perennials were grouped together in an herbaceous border, but it's far better to use perennials among shrubs, so that you keep some structure in the winter and have lots of extra colour at other times.

The choice of perennials at **Ardcarne Plantsplus Garden Centre** is one of the largest in the country and you'll find many unusual varieties as well as the old favourites. You can find varieties for all kinds of locations, whether you have a shady garden, damp soil or a windy site – in fact any kind of soil or position.

Where to use perennials

The versatility of perennials is something that can be fully exploited in the garden. You can find varieties that are suitable for ground cover, shady areas, coastal gardens, and wet or dry soil. If like many gardeners in the west of Ireland, you have heavy wet soil or a damp area in the garden then perennials such as **astilbes**, **hostas**, **arum lilies**, **perennial lobelias** and **rodgersias** will all luxuriate and thrive. Ground covering perennials are extremely useful for keeping down weeds. Some of the best varieties for ground cover are **ajuga**, **bergenia**, **geranium** and **Persicaria affinis ‘Superba’**, which will knit together to form a dense carpet. For the best effect always plant perennials in groups, using 3-5 of the same variety together, or more if using them for ground cover in a large area.

Aftercare

Very little aftercare is needed with most perennials, apart from a little staking for tall varieties or cutting the old stems back in the winter. Every few years most of them will usually benefit from being dug up and divided, replanting strong pieces back into compost-enriched soil. This is best done in spring, just as new growth starts to appear. Most plants will divide easily, either by pulling pieces apart from the main crown or splitting through it with a spade or sharp knife, ensuring each piece has some roots and shoots. Dividing perennials like this keeps them vigorous and means that they will flower even better afterwards. It also means you can make a few extra plants to replant around the garden or give to friends!

Our Top Ten Perennial Recommendations

Geranium Rozanne – Extremely long flowering season of blue saucer-shaped flowers

Penstemon Garnet – Spikes of vivid pink ‘foxglove-like’ flowers summer-late autumn

Phlox paniculata – Reliable cottage-garden favourite – scented flower heads July-Sept

Kniphofia – Red Hot Pokers – long-lived perennials – hot yellow-red flower spikes

Hosta – Large lush rosettes of leaves – green, gold or variegated. Great in shade.

Helianthemum – Rock Rose – long-flowering low perennials – ideal for front of border

Astilbe – Large feathery flower plumes in pink, red or white over ferny leaves.

Crocosmia ‘Lucifer’ – A striking red-flowered ‘montbretia’. Good sword-shaped leaves

Heuchera – Colourful evergreen leaves – mostly purple shades –great in pots

Nepeta – Catmint – Aromatic grey leaves and a large flush of lavender blue flowers