



The Best of Bowood : Spring Garden Essentials

There are so many plants that we love it seems an impossible task to choose a short list of key plants for building a garden. By dividing the growing season into three parts we are giving you the opportunity to plan (or revise) a garden in stages, and select elements from each list to keep your garden interesting year-round. Our list starts where spring begins: with blooming bulbs and shade-loving ephemerals. It's important, however, to consider the largest elements of your design first so you might wish to read the list upside down! Not all elements may be needed and filling a garden from just one list would defeat the purpose of thinking across seasons. Leave space: gardens are always in flux – keep working on yours!

If you don't have...

...spring-blooming bulbs, we recommend you send yourself a note to buy some next fall. Saving strategic spots for bulbs in a new garden bed will yield a steadily expanding display of yearly color when most needed. If you currently have bulbs, carefully mark them so that won't be damaged by digging as you add new plants to your garden. As an alternative, you can dig bulbs up after the foliage dies back and promptly plant them where they'll add variety to your display next year.

- Early spring begins with Snowdrop (*Galanthus* spp.), Crocus (*Crocus* spp.), Siberian Squill (*Scilla sib*), Grape Hyacinth (*Muscari arm*) all of which will dependably naturalize over the years, as will all Daffodils (*Narcissus* spp.).
- Finish spring with Tulips (*Tulipa* spp.) – choose species tulips or Darwin varieties if you want them to perennialize.

Shade Perennials

Most of the earliest spring bloomers appear in the shadier portions of our garden, enjoying the early sunshine before the trees leaf out, appreciating some shade as it gets hotter. A few are ephemerals which will go completely dormant in summer. Select those with dynamic foliage and you'll have color and texture even when the blooms have faded.

Dicentra / Bleeding Heart

Mertensia / Virginia Blue Bells

Polygonatum / Solomon's Seal

Helleborus / Lenten Rose

Phlox div / Woodland Phlox

Stylophorum diph / Celandine Poppy

Heuchera / Coral Bells

Polemonium / Jacob's Ladder

Thalictrum / Meadow Rue

Sun Perennials

Gently and gradually pull back the mulch to reveal the early bloomers and the garden begins to take off! We've picked some tried-and-true, easygoing favorites as well as a few more unusual choices.

Anemone sylv / Windflower

Geranium / Cranesbill

Pulsatilla / Pasque Flower

Aquilegia / Columbine

Geum / Avens

Sisyrinchium / Blue-eyed Grass

Armeria / Sea Thrift

Nepeta / Catmint

Trollius chin / Globe Flower

Baptisia / False Indigo

Paeonia spp. / Peony

Veronica 'Whitewater' / Speedwell

Calamintha / Calamint or Nepitella

Phlox 'Minnie Pearl' / Early Phlox

Viola cornuta / Perennial Violet

Vines

Most vines take a while to get started in spring but here are a couple of early bloomers to fill a trellis or arbor. Note the species listed as other types of *Clematis* and *Wisteria* will all bloom later in summer.

Clematis montana / Clematis *Wisteria frutescens* / American Wisteria

Shade Shrubs

There are only a few spring-bloomers, so this is not a large category, but they are all the more welcome for their ability to add abundant color with height and depth for the shade garden. In addition to their seasonal flowers, they bring a variety of foliage textures to the classic evergreens of the shade – boxwood and yew.

Azalea spp. *Kerria* / Easter Rose *Rhododendron* spp.

Sun Shrubs

Even in a small yard there can be space for spring-flowering shrubs since so many have been hybridized to stay compact and tidy. For somewhat larger spaces, consider choosing one of the more substantial shrubs as a specimen or focal point and place it where you can enjoy it from inside as well as outside, for those early days when it is still chilly out.

Chaenomeles / Quince *Pinus con* / ‘Taylor’s Sunburst’ Pine *Syringa* / Lilac
Deutzia / Deutzia *Rhus typh* / Staghorn Sumac *Viburnum carlesii* /
Hamamelis / Witch Hazel *Rosa* spp. / Drift Roses Korean spice Viburnum
Philadelphus / Mock Orange *Sorbaria* / False Spirea *Viburnum pragense* /
Picea abies / Norway Spruce *Spiraea* / Spirea Prague Viburnum

Trees

The swelling buds on redbuds, dogwoods and magnolias are happy signs that we are close to the abrupt explosion of a classic Missouri spring. In contrast, the slow appearance of foliage on Japanese maples is like a magic show – the feathery leaves unfurl like delicate fans. Other trees and shrubs share this enticing trait: beeches, elderberry, ninebark and staghorn sumac.

Acer palm / Japanese Maple *Cornus flor* / Dogwood *Prunus* / Flowering Cherry
Amelanchier / Serviceberry *Cornus kousa* / Chinese Dogwood *Styrax* / Japanese Snowbell
Cercis / Redbud *Magnolia* / Magnolia
Chionanthus / Fringetree *Malus* / Flowering Crabapple

Of course, that’s not all...

We have limited ourselves to an ultimate list of indispensable favorites but there are plenty of other excellent choices to make your garden shine in spring. Consider this a fashion show to fire your imagination and come in to Bowood when you are ready to tailor your garden for your own personal look.