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Gardening Tall

Old Country Garden



10 New Hydrangeas

MINNESOTA STATE
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about the cover

Water lilies, such as Nymphaea 'Pink Grapefruit', are beautiful basics for water gardens.

Photo by Soni Forsman

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Pulmonaria 'Dark Vader'

PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRACONIA HORTICULTURE

a pattern language

Let your garden design speak with stunning variegated perennials.

By Mike Heger

Foliage is often the most undervalued element in many garden designs, yet it is the quality that makes individual plants most recognizable throughout the season. It is also the key to building season-long interest in the garden.

When designing a flower garden, we tend to select plants based primarily on such factors as bloom size, shape, texture, and color. This is the wrong approach to building a garden design based on successful long-term plant combinations. The actual starting point should be cultural requirements, based on the conditions present on the individual site. For example, if your site is a hot, dry one, the plants selected must be tolerant of that situation or they will not prove successful over a long period. The second most important consideration should be the foliage of the plants that are candidates for inclusion in the garden. When studying foliage quality, be

silver variegated foliage

Scientific Name	Common Name	Exposure	Height (in inches)	Characteristics
<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> var. <i>pictum</i>	Japanese painted fern	Partial shade	12–18	Finely cut green fronds with silvery markings and reddish stems.
<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Emerald Mist' USPPAF	Variegated false forget-me-not	Light shade	12–15	Green leaves with prominent silver spots.
<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Mr. Morse' USPPAF	Variegated false forget-me-not	Light shade	12–18	Frosty silver leaves with green edges and veins.
<i>Cyclamen hederifolium</i>	Hardy cyclamen	Partial shade	4–6	Silver mottled leaves appear in fall, persist through winter, and disappear by midsummer.
<i>Heuchera</i> 'Cinnabar Silver' USPPAF	Hybrid coral bells	Partial shade to full sun	18	Metallic silver leaves with prominent green veins; 'Silver Scrolls' USPP 12066 has purplish foliage that is heavily silvered between the veins.
x <i>Heucherella</i> 'Quicksilver' USPS 11081	Foamy bells	Light shade to full sun	18	Purplish leaves marked with silver between veins.
<i>Lamiumstrum galeobdolan</i> 'Herman's Pride'	Variegated yellow archangel	Partial shade	12	Leaves are dappled with silver and have green veins.
<i>Lamium maculatum</i> 'Orchid Frost' USPP 11122	Spotted dead nettle	Partial shade	6–18	Silvery white leaves with scalloped blue-green margins; other commonly available cultivars include 'Beacon Silver', 'Chequers', 'Pink Pewter', 'Purple Dragon' USPP 15890, and 'White Nancy'.
<i>Pachysandra procumbens</i>	Alleghany Spurge	Partial shade	6–8	Dull green leaves with silver spotting that becomes more pronounced as the season progresses.
<i>Pulmonaria lognifolia</i> spp. <i>cevennensis</i>	Variegated long-leaved spurge	Partial shade	12–18	Heavily silvered, lance-shaped leaves; two other very good selections with narrow silver-spotted leaves are 'Milky Way' and 'Raspberry Splash' USPP 12138.
<i>Pulmonaria</i> 'Dark Vader' USPP 12333	Hybrid lungwort	Partial shade	10–12	The leaves of this cultivar are more elliptical in shape than the above varieties and are heavily marked with silver; another good cultivar with similar shaped foliage is 'High Contrast' USPP 12337.

gold / yellow variegated foliage

Scientific Name	Common Name	Exposure	Height (in inches)	Characteristics
<i>Ajuga reptans</i> 'Toffee Chip' USPPAF	Variegated common bugleweed	Partial shade	4–6	Gray green leaves with creamy gold margins.
<i>Aquilegia vulgaris</i> 'Leprechaun Gold'	Variegated garden columbine	Full sun to light shade	24	Foliage marbled with gold.
<i>Astrantia major</i> 'Sunningdale Variegated'	Variegated great masterwort	Full sun to light shade	24–30	Creamy yellow edges and splashes on green leaves; most showy early in the season.
<i>Bergenia</i> 'Solar Flare' USPPAF	Variegated bergenia	Full sun to light shade	10–15	Cabbage-like leaves with creamy yellow borders; most showy early in season.
<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i> 'Eldorado' USPP 16486	Variegated feather reed grass	Full sun to light shade	48–60	Green leaves with bright gold centers.
<i>Carex muskingumensis</i> 'Oehme'	Variegated palm sedge	Full sun to light shade	15–20	Green leaves with narrow yellow margins that develop as the season progresses.
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> 'Variegata'	Variegated queen of the meadow	Full sun to light shade	36–48	Creamy yellow variegation in leaf centers.
<i>Hakonechloa macra</i> 'Aureola'	Golden variegated hakone grass	Partial shade	12–24	Narrow yellow leaves with green margins.
<i>Iris palida</i> 'Variegata'	Variegated sweet iris	Full sun	24–36	Linear foliage with creamy yellow stripes.
<i>Lamium maculatum</i> 'Anne Greenaway'	Variegated spotted dead nettle	Partial shade	6–12	Green leaves are touched with silver and broadly edged chartreuse.
<i>Lysimachia punctata</i> 'Golden Alexander' USPP 13547	Variegated yellow loosestrife	Light shade to full sun	24	Lime green leaves edged creamy yellow.
<i>Molinia caerulea</i> 'Variegata'	Variegated purple moor grass	Light shade to full sun	18–30	Narrow green leaves with creamy yellow borders.
<i>Phlox</i> 'Becky Towe' USPP 12908	Variegated summer phlox—paniculata group	Full sun to light shade	24–36	Gold leaf edges age to creamy gold; similar cultivars include 'Elizabeth' USPP 14826, 'Goldmine' USPP 12070, and 'Rubymine' USPP 12824.
<i>Sedum</i> Autumn Delight™ ('Beka')	Variegated stonecrop	Full sun	18–24	Chartreuse yellow leaves with blue-green margins.
<i>Symphytum</i> 'Goldsmith'	Variegated comfrey	Light shade to full sun	8–12	Green leaves widely but irregularly edged with yellow.
<i>Symphytum x uplandicum</i> 'Axminster Gold'	Variegated comfrey	Light shade to full sun	24–36	Gray-green leaves with wide yellow edges.
<i>Thymus</i> 'Deone Valley'	Golden variegated thyme	Full sun	4–6	Green leaves marked with irregular golden patches; most showy early in the season. Other golden variegated cultivars include 'Gold Transparent', 'Hartington Silver', 'Highland Cream', and 'Wedgewood'.
<i>Yucca filamentosa</i> 'Color Guard'	Variegated Adam's needie	Full sun	24–36	Creamy yellow linear foliage with green edges.



PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRANOVA NURSERIES



Ajuga reptans 'Toffee Chip'

PHOTO COURTESY OF TERRANOVA NURSERIES



Yucca filamentosa 'Color Guard'

white variegated foliage

Scientific Name	Common Name	Exposure	Height (in inches)	Characteristics
<i>Acorus calamus</i> 'Variegatus'	Variegated sweet flag	Full sun to light shade	36	Linear foliage with creamy white margins.
<i>Arrhenatherum bulbosum</i> 'Variegatum'	Variegated bulbous oat grass	Full sun to light shade	12	Narrow green leaves striped white; best in cool weather.
<i>Brunnera macrophylla</i> 'Hardspen Cream'	Variegated false forget-me-not	Light shade	12–18	Irregular creamy white edges.
<i>Calamagrostis x acutiflora</i> 'Avalanche'	Variegated feather reed grass	Full sun to light shade	48–60	Medium green leaves with white centers.
<i>Carex siderosticha</i> 'Variegata'	Variegated broad leaved sedge	Partial shade	10–12	Medium to dark green leaves with creamy white margins.
<i>Disporum sessile</i> 'Variegatum'	Variegated fairy bells	Partial to full shade	12–24	Lance-shaped leaves striped with white.
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i> 'Lorraine Sunshine' USPP 10690	Variegated oxeye sunflower	Full sun to light shade	30–36	White leaves with abundant green veins; most showy early in the season.
<i>Iris pallida</i> 'Argentea Variegata'	Variegated sweet iris	Full sun	24–36	Linear foliage striped white.
<i>Lysimachia punctata</i> 'Alexander' USPP 10598	Variegated yellow loosestrife	Light shade to full sun	24	Lime green leaves with ivory margins.
<i>Phlox</i> 'Norah Leigh'	Variegated summer phlox—paniculata group	Full sun to light shade	18–36	Green leaves with creamy white margins; other similar cultivars include 'Crème de Menthe', 'Frosted Elegance', 'Harlequin' and 'Silvermine' USPP 12764.
<i>Physostegia virginiana</i> 'Variegata'	Variegated false dragonhead	Light shade to full sun	24–36	Leaves irregularly banded creamy white.
<i>Polemonium reptans</i> 'Stairway to Heaven' USPP15187	Variegated creeping Jacob's ladder	Light shade to full sun	12–18	Creamy white margins; most showy early in the season.
<i>Polemonium reptans</i> 'Touch of Class' USPPAF	Variegated creeping Jacob's ladder	Light shade to full sun	12–15	Green leaves with narrow white edges; most showy early in the season.
<i>Polygonatum odoratum</i> 'Variegatum'	Variegated Solomon's seal	Partial to full shade	24–36	Green leaves edged creamy white.
<i>Sedum sieboldi</i> 'Mediovariegatum'	Variegated October Daphne	Full sun	6–9	Center of leaves marked with creamy white blotches.
<i>Sedum spectabile</i> 'Pink Chablis'	Variegated showy stonecrop	Full sun	14–18	Bluish green leaves with variable white margins.
<i>Symphytum x uplandicum</i> 'Variegatum'	Variegated comfrey	Light shade to full sun	24–36	Gray green leaves with bright creamy white edges.
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i> 'Silver Posie'	White variegated thyme	Full sun	6–12	Green leaves with creamy white margins; other white variegated cultivars include 'Hi Ho Silver' and 'Silver Queen'.



Acorus calamus 'Variegatus'

looking for the same factors you would when contemplating flowers that might be included in a garden design—size, shape, texture, and color. These are more important than the flower qualities that we often give primary consideration to.

Fortunately, the possibilities with foliage are abundant. Obviously, size and shape can be whatever you want but they must be in proportion to the garden itself. Texture can range from bold, architectural leaves to more linear foliage, all the way to leaves that are lacy and very finely textured in appearance. And lastly, color can be in delightful shades of green, but leaves also come in hues of blue, purple, yellow, pink, red, orange, black, brown, and silver.

Here are a variety of perennials to choose from with variegated foliage patterns only. (A discussion of all those wonderful solid colored foliagees will have to wait for another time.) Variegation patterns can be diverse but they are usually classified as either edged, striped, veined, spotted, blotched, or zoned. Variegation may originate in a number of ways but often it is the result of the absence or reduction of chlorophyll in a portion of the leaf. When that is the case, it is important to understand that any

reduction in the amount of chlorophyll that the plant has available to manufacture food will result in some loss of plant vigor relative to the plain green-leaved version of the same plant. It is also important to be aware that certain variegation patterns are transient and they only are showy for a limited time during the growing season.

From a design perspective, I'll be the first to admit that perennials with variegated foliage patterns must be used judiciously and carefully. I have observed plant collections based solely on foliage variegation and there is so much going on visually that your eye does not know where to settle. On the other hand, carefully chosen variegated plants can be used as focal points, specimen plants, or as a contrast to solid greens. When carefully selected and utilized, they can add a dramatic spark to a garden design. Culturally, you can find a variegated foliage perennial to fill any niche be it sun or shade, wet or dry, light soil or heavy soil.

Perennials with variegated foliage patterns are perhaps more numerous and diverse than many gardeners realize. In order to minimize confusion regarding colors, I have chosen to group them by the color of their variegation. As a means to include as many plants as possible in a brief article such as this, they are presented in a chart format. These lists are far from encompassing, but they do offer some of the best variegated perennials for northern gardeners. Try some in your garden. **ng**

Mike Heger owns *Ambergate Gardens in Chaska* and is the author of *Growing Perennials in Cold Climates*.



red/purple variegated foliage

Scientific Name	Common Name	Exposure	Height (in inches)	Characteristics
<i>Ajuga reptans</i> 'Burgundy Glow'	Variegated common bugleweed	Part shade	6	Foliage is variegated burgundy, creamy white, and green.
<i>Astilbe</i> Color Flash®	False spirea	Light shade	15–20	Foliage emerges green but takes on shades of burgundy and purple as it matures.
<i>Athyrium Filix-femina</i> 'Lady in Red'	Red-stemmed lady fern	Part shade	24–36	Finely cut, medium green fronds with red stems.
<i>Athyrium niponicum</i> 'Burgundy Lace' USPP 15072	Japanese painted fern	Part shade	12–18	Silvery fronds overlaid with burgundy in spring.
<i>Huechera</i> 'Green Spice'	Hybrid coral bells	Light shade to full sun	24–30	Striking red venation patten on green leaves overlaid with silver.
<i>xHuecherella</i> 'Kimono' USPP 12154	Foamy bells	Part shade to full sun	18	Silvery green leaves with maroon-purple markings.
<i>xHuecherella</i> 'Stoplight' USPP 16835	Foamy bells	Part shade	15–18	Yellow leaves with wine-red markings in their centers; offers better vigor than 'Sunspot' USPP 14825.
<i>Hibiscus</i> 'Kopper King' USPP 10793	Rose mallow	Full sun	42	Foliage color ranges from coppery green to reddish.
<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> 'Red Baron'	Japanese blood grass	Full sun	12–18	Upright green leaves emerge with purplish red tips, color expands as the season progresses. Marginally hardy.
<i>Panicum virgatum</i> 'Shenandoah'	Switch grass	Full sun	36	Green foliage, taking on reddish purple tones by mid-summer; recent cultivars offering improved coloration include 'Huron Solstice' USPPAF; 'Prairie Fire' USPPAF; and 'Red Sunset' USPPAF.
<i>Sedum causticola</i> 'Lidakense'	Stonecrop	Full sun	4	Blue-green leaves tinged reddish purple.
<i>Tiarella</i> 'Sugar and Spice' USPP 16738	Hybrid foamflower	Partial shade	12–15	Lacy leaves have dark reddish purple markings in their centers; other good cultivars with similar central markings include 'Candy Striper' USPP 15528; 'Jeepers-Creepers' USPP 13437; 'Neon Lights' USPP 13289; 'Pink Skyrocket' USPP 13382; and 'Pirate's Patch' USPP14907.