



Water-Savvy Garden Design Balancing Beauty, Efficiency & Good Stewardship

By Karen Chapman CPH

Rather than pining for the “greener grass” on the other side of the proverbial fence, learn to make the most of what you have while conserving both water and time. Maximize your gardens potential by fully assessing the site conditions, determining key design criteria then combining suitable plants for a professional look. By grouping plants with similar watering and lighting needs you will reduce the use of supplemental water and reduce plant stress.

Site assessment is key to maximizing potential:

- Soil analysis (observation, squeeze test, drainage test, soil texture test)
- Light analysis (photography)
- Design analysis (what is missing?)

Remember: not every drought tolerant plant needs sandy soil!

Creating Combinations

Think Sesame Street style! i.e. “one of these things is not like the other”. Balance similarities and differences between texture, shape, size and color.

Design *foliage* first (flowers are fleeting)

Think – and shop – in combinations. Avoid plugging gaps with onesy-twosys.

Plants that have done well in dry shade in my Duvall, WA garden

- Bleeding heart (*Lamprocapnos* spp.)
- Andromeda (*Pieris japonica* cvs.) Green foliage forms do best in more shade
- Axminster Gold comfrey (*Symphytum* × *uplandicum* 'Axminster Gold') Best in dappled light
- Telekia, Ox-Eye daisy (*Telekia speciosa*) Best in dappled light
- Solomons seal (*Polygonatum* spp.) Variegated forms are lovely in shade.
- Red bishop’s hat, red barrenwort (*Epimedium* × *rubrum*). Tougher than fancy \$\$ varieties!
- Creeping Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*).
- Variegated wood rush (*Luzula sylvatica* 'Marginata') Remarkably shade tolerant.
- Hellebore (*Helleborus* spp. – especially the Gold Collection)
- Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera* spp. – especially Sea Heart, Silver Heart)

- Painter's Palette knotweed (*Persicaria virginiana* 'Painter's Palette'). Less invasive in dry soil
- Wintergreen (*Gaultheria procumbens*)
- Western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*)

Plants that have done well in hot, dry areas in my Duvall, WA garden

- Whirling butterflies gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri* 'Whirling Butterflies')
- Paprika yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* 'Paprika')
- Arkansas Blue Star (*Amsonia hubrichtii*)
- Celtic Pride Siberian cypress (*Microbiota decussata* 'Celtic Pride')
- Blue Star juniper (*Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star')
- Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm')
- Millenium ornamental onion (*Allium* 'Millenium')
- Phenomenal lavender (*Lavandula intermedia* 'Phenomenal')
- Fleabane (Erigeron 'Profusion', *Erigeron pulchellus* var. *pulchellus* 'Lynnhaven Carpet')

Trees/plants that have done well in winter-wet, summer-dry soils (w/some pm shade) in Duvall, WA

- River birch (*Betula nigra* 'Heritage' and the variegated *Betula n.* 'Shiloh Splash')
- Red twig dogwood (*Cornus* spp.)
- Little Henry Virginia sweetspire (*Itea* v. 'Little Henry')
- English primroses (*Primula vulgaris*) Goes dormant in late summer without water
- Bears breeches (*Acanthus mollis*)
- Toothed saxifrage (*Saxifraga x geum* 'Dentata'). Best in dappled shade.
- Rainbow drooping fetterbush (*Leucothoe fontanesiana* 'Rainbow')

But I have killed: *Mahonia*, *Berberis*, *Rhamnus frangula* 'Fine Line', *Calamagrostis*, *Viburnum davidii*)

Keep in touch

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