



Uncanoonuc Mt. Perennials

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TROPICALS *Unusual Annuals and Tender Perennials*

Once limited to a handful of varieties grown strictly as houseplants, there's a marvelous selection of plants native to the tropics and subtropics available to outdoor gardeners today. Perennials at home, they won't survive northern winters and are often grown and enjoyed as annuals. (No threat of invasiveness here.) Many can be over-wintered with protection and enjoyed year to year as tender perennials. Diverse and often flamboyant, they add color and drama to your garden. Grown in the border or in a container, they're different, fun and easy to grow.

Drapers: The following have a trailing habit and make fine additions to a hanging basket, decorative container or used as a small scale groundcover in the border.

Licorice Plants including 'Limelight'

'Silver Falls' Dichondra

Sweet Potato Vines including "Blackie" and 'Dwarf Margarita'

Mid-size Specimens: These versatile plants can be grown alone as handsome specimens or used in exciting mixed plantings. In a decorative container or in the border, groups of plants with colors and textures playing off each other can be very satisfying.

Agastaches including 'Apricot Sunrise' Mexican Hyssop

Rex Begonias including 'Escargot'

Fuchsia Begonia

'Gloucester White' Dusty Miller

Coleus including 'Black Dragon,' 'Sedona' and 'Dipped in Wine'

Leopard Plant

Fuchsias including 'Gartenmeister Bonstedt'

Heliotrope including 'Marine'

Persian Shield

Grasses: They're all about texture and color, and these clump forming ornamental grasses make wonderful companions to plants with bushy or draping habits, or bold foliage. They could be solo artists - the fiber optic grass is very appealing in a pot on its own.

Mexican Feather Grass

Fountain Grass including Purple Fountain Grass

Fiber Optic Grass



Large Specimens: Big leaves, big flowers, big impact. These stunning beauties define the exotic, tropical look. They can be effectively used in borders but are very often given the “star” treatment and grown in large containers. This simplifies over-wintering them (see below) and results in even larger plants in succeeding years.

Angel’s Trumpets including ‘Golden Queen’ and ‘Double White’

Blue Ginger

Lion’s Ear

Plumbago including ‘Royal Cape’

Elephant Ears including ‘Chartreuse Giant’

Crocodile Fern

Cannas

Bananas

Daturas including ‘Evening Fragrance’

Vines: What says “jungle” more than a climbing, twining vine with impossibly complex, very beautiful flowers?

Passionflowers including ‘Lady Margaret’

Corkscrew Flower Vine

Over-Wintering Tropicals

Fast growing, relatively inexpensive tropicals (ie: Sweet Potato Vines) are often treated as annuals. Choicer types or those that have more impact in the garden with the increased size that comes with age (ie: Angel’s Trumpets) can be over-wintered. Those of you with a greenhouse know who you are. For the rest of us, options include:

- Grow as a house plant near a bright, warm window
- For plants that grow from corms, tubers and rhizomes, lift the root system, or move containerized plants after first frost and store in a cool, dark spot above freezing. A cellar often works well. Check potted plants once a month during the winter and water if dry.

We have given suggestions for treatment of each different tropical in the notes that come with each plant. The references listed below are fabulous sources of more in depth information on all aspects of growing tropicals.

References:

Armitage’s Manual of Annuals, Biennials, and Half-Hardy Perennials. By Allan M. Armitage. Timber Press, Portland, OR, 2001.

Hot Plants for Cool Climate. By Susan A. Roth and Dennis Schrader. A Frances Tenenbaum Book, Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, NY, 2000.

Annuals for Connoisseurs. By Wayne Winterrowd. A Horticulture Book, Prentice Hall, New York, NY, 1992.