Perennials grow in so many unique ways! We decided to add rhizomes to the mix because so many plants have them. Plus, rhizomes are below ground, so they may not be as familiar as above-ground structures.

**RHIZOMES**

Rhizomes are horizontal, underground stems. They often have several buds along them, which can lead to some varieties spreading quickly. Quackgrass, anyone?

*Canna:* These tropical plants have large, paddle-shaped leaves that often have brightly colored veins. Flowers come in a variety of colors, mostly ranging from yellow to red. The rhizomes need to be dug out and kept in a cool location if you want to keep them for the next season.

Hostas: There are a few rhizomatous varieties of hostas. One is *H. ‘Clausa’,* with narrow, green foliage. Another unique characteristic is that its lavender flower buds don’t open! Zone 3.

Ferns – These versatile shade plants provide texture for a shady spot. Japanese Painted Ferns (*Athyrium niponicum* ‘Pictum’) have beautiful silvery 12-15” foliage with burgundy stems, lovely in combination with dark-leaved Cimicifugas. Plant ferns with hostas or heucheras for contrast in texture. *A. ‘Dre’s Dagger’* (18”) has a different look; its narrow, deep green fronds are crisscrossed, coming to a narrow point with a terminal crest. Zone 3.

*Convallaria:* If you need a plant to fill in an area quickly, here is your answer! This aggressive groundcover gets 8-12” tall. Wands of fragrant, bell-shaped flowers appear in May. Grows in part sun to shade. Zone 3.

*Aegopodium variegatum:* Speaking of aggressive plants, this one also fits the bill! Snow-on-the-Mountain has showy green and white foliage that tops out at around 12” tall. Cluster of white flowers appear in June. Said to prefer shade but seems to grow absolutely anywhere. Zone 3.

*Asarum:* Wild Ginger is a fun groundcover that blooms early in the season but it really grown for the heart-shaped foliage. *A. canadense* is the native variety, with large, soft green leaves that form a thick mat. *A. europaeum* (European Ginger) is an evergreen variety with glossy leaves; it is a bit more delicate and will spread much more slowly than *A. canadense.* Both varieties get about 4-6” tall and are hardy to Zone 3.

*Sisyrinchium* ‘Lucerne’ (10”). This diminutive member of the *Iris* family has dark green foliage covered with blue, star-like flowers in spring. It likes full sun to part-shade and makes a lovely border plant. Zone 4.

*Belamcanda:* Though its common name is Blackberry lily, this plant belongs to the *Iris* family. *B. ‘Hello Yellow’* (18-24”) produces a profusion of small, bright-yellow flowers above a compact clump of green, sword-shaped leaf. *B. chinensis* (24-36”) produces orangish flowers speckled with red throughout. Both
varieties produce tan, pear-shaped seed pods that burst open to reveal clusters of black seeds resembling blackberries. One of the later-blooming sun perennials, generally starting in late August. Zone 4.

**Iris:** Named after the Greek Goddess who rode rainbows, irises come in a variety of colors and sizes. Siberian irises are have narrower leaves and bloom a bit later than tall bearded irises (*I. germanica*). *I. siberica* ‘Sky Mirror’ (New 2018, 32-35") has pale sky-blue falls with navy blue centers. *I. ‘Contrast in Styles’* (28-34") is named for its contrasting color patterns; it has purple-wine standards; the falls display prominent white and yellow signals with purple veining. *I. ‘Rip City’* (39") is a new tall bearded Iris that has carmine red flowers with golden beards. Also new is *I. ‘Chasing Rainbows’* (35”), with a beautiful combination of apricot, pink and orchid standards atop wide ruffled falls of orchid and violet.

**TUBERS**

Tubers are modified stems and can be one of two types: root tubers have buds at the base of the stem, while true (stem) tubers are swellings at the ends of rhizomes. Both store food for growth for the following year. Some tubers can be kept from year to year.

A potato is perhaps the best-known example of a tuber. They are full of starch and can be cut up for planting. The ‘eyes’ of a potato are the buds that sprout new plants when conditions are right.

Dahlias are one example of a root tuber. They are sometimes sold in packs but often are found in individual pots. They can be used as fillers in containers or planted in the ground. Plant in full sun.

Cyclamens form from stem tubers and are often sold as houseplants. Flowers come in white, pink, or red. The foliage often has silver marbling, adding to its aesthetic value. These may do ok outside in partial sun but are most often used as a houseplant.

Begonias: Tuberous begonias have an array of beautiful flowers. They need partial shade (morning sun is ok) and they do best if kept on the dry side.

**Aconitum:** Monkshood are stately plants (36-48") that produce spectacular flowers in July or August. All parts of these plants are toxic (including the tubers), so you may want to wear gloves when handling them (and monitor children and pets). *A. napellus* has dark indigo-blue flowers and attractive dark green foliage. *A. carmichaelii* ‘Cloudy’ is new this year, with bicolor blue and white flowers. Zone 3.

**Asclepias tuberosa:** Butterfly weeds are truly butterfly magnets. The original, orange variety (A. *tuberosa*) gets 24” tall. A. *tuberosa* ‘Blonde Bombshell’ (New in 2018; 18-20” tall) produces bright golden-yellow flowers; A. *tuberosa* ‘Gay Butterflies’ (24-30” tall) produces a mix of colors from yellow to orangish-red. Zone 3.

**Paeonia:** Peonies are old standbys that seem to grow with virtually no care. Many of the newer hybrids grow to similar heights but don’t droop like the old-fashioned peonies. *P. ‘Buckeye Belle’* (34") produces double, maroon-red flowers with golden stamens (Zone 3). *P. ‘Coral Charm’* (36") has large, deep coral buds that open to semi-double flowers (Zone 3). Intersectional peonies are crosses between garden peonies and tree peonies. *P. ‘Bartzella’* produces (30-36") huge, 6-8” pastel yellow, fragrant flowers (Zone 4). Tree peonies reach 4-5’ and have very large flowers; new this year is *P. ‘Chojuraku’* (Zone 4), with large, double lavender flowers.
BULBS

True bulbs are short, flattened stems with fleshy modified leaves that store food for the developing plant. Bulbs need some moisture throughout the entire season, even after the foliage has turned brown for those bulbs that go dormant, but too much moisture can make them rot. You may want to use bulb food to increase flowering along with a product to keep the squirrels away. Bulbs will frequently increase by the production of bulblets, forming larger clumps annually.

Spring-flowering bulbs should be planted in the fall. These bulbs include tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, muscari, and squill. Plant en masse for large swaths of color, or in small clusters; most will spread by bulblets, providing a clump of flowers.

Allium:  This plant (related to onions) comes from a bulb that you can plant anytime throughout the season. Some varieties or ornamental and some can be used in cooking. The perennial plant of the year for 2018 is Allium ‘Millenium’. It grows 15-18” tall and produces 2” round amethyst purple flowers in mid to late summer. A. ‘Mount Everest’ is a large, white variety (44”) that flowers in June. The foliage of A. ‘Blue Eddy’ is a bit different, with pinwheel-like rosettes of blue-gray foliage (8-12”).

Lilium: Perhaps the most recognized plants that come from a bulb, lilies come in a variety of heights, colors, and types. Asiatic Lilies have flowers that face upright and are not fragrant, while Oriental Lily flowers generally face outward and are fragrant, although new breeding is resulting in some Oriental lilies that face upward too. Longiflorum lilies are Easter Lilies, and there are some fun LA (Longiflorum/Asiatic crosses) and LO (Longiflorum/Oriental crosses) on the market. Some new varieties we are looking forward to include:

- L. Asiatic Double ‘Apricot Fudge’: Unusual apricot-colored, rose-shaped flowers have upright brown stamens that stand well above the petals. Cool!! 24-36” tall. Zone 3.
- L. Asiatic ‘Netty’s Pride’: This lily has amazing coloring! Its thick white petals have intense black-purple freckles that merge into a mahogany center, plus white eyes with purple freckles. 36-48” tall. Zone 3.
- L. Oriental ‘Jaybird’: Large pink flowers have red stripes, stamens and freckles. 40-44” tall. Zone 4.
- L. Oriental Double ‘My Wedding’: Clean white flowers have hints of green in the center, but no stamens (so no pollen!). 32-44” tall. Zone 4.
- L. OT ‘Big Brother’: O.T. lilies are crosses between oriental lilies and trumpet lilies. This giant has enormous lemon-yellow flowers with creamy edges; flowers may reach 14” across! 48-60” tall. Zone 3.

CORMS

Corms are solid masses of stem tissue rather than concentric rings of modified leaves. Cormlets may grow around the base. Corms provide a solid, textured food supply for the stems above ground.

Gladiolus:  Glads are known for their tall flower spikes. They are available in a variety of colors and grow from 2-6’ in height! Plant in the spring once the danger of frost has passed; these corms will not survive the winters north of Zone 7, so dig them after the first frost but before the ground freezes.
Crocus: This member of the Iris family is one of the earliest spring bloomers, but there are also varieties that bloom in late fall and early winter in warmer climates. Spring-blooming crocus should be planted early in the fall in well-drained soil. Most varieties are hardy to Zone 3. Plant with daffodils to help ward off animals.

Liatris: Blazing Star (also called Gayfeather) is a hardy prairie plant that can tolerate full sun along with dry and windy conditions. It is adored by bees and butterflies! L. pycnostachya is a native variety that gets 36-60” tall and produces feathery, reddish-purple flowers on tall spikes. L. microcephala is a shorty, reaching only 18-24” tall; it’s also a native and produces lavender flower spikes. L.’Floristan Violet’ is the best variety for cut flowers with its 36-48” spikes of rosy-purple flowers; a similar variety has white flower spikes (L. ‘Floristan White’).

Arisaema triphyllum: Jack-in-the-Pulpit is an unusual North American native. The flowers, appearing in spring, are composed of a reddish-purple spadix enclosed by a hooded spathe (the ‘pulpit’) that is green and heavily striped in purplish red. Attractive leaves die down in midsummer. Brilliant red orange fruits on leafless stalks are very showy. This plant needs afternoon shade, as it is native to woodland areas. Zone 4.

So how do you care for your bulbs/corms/tubers over winter?

Many of the plants described above can stay in the ground; tulips, lilies, and most of the perennials will come back year after year. Dahlias and Glads are the two plants that you will definitely dig. Wait until after the plant has frozen and before the ground has frozen to dig them. Leave them on top of the ground for a few days or even hang them upside down to allow them to dry completely. Cut off the old plant and clear any dirt stuck to the tuber or corm. Place in a cardboard box, paper bag, or other breathable container, layering with newspaper, and store in a dry basement or root cellar.

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