

Making a Mixed Border

Just ten different plants, with flowers in shades of purple, blue, and rose can create a lively, three-season show.

A MIXED BORDER is one in which small flowering trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, annuals and bulbs are combined for maximum season interest. They are rich in flowers, but also in interesting plant shapes, and in bark, berry and twig. Except for clipped yew and box, both of which are traditionally associated with this style of planting, other evergreens, and particularly hard-needled conifers, are almost never used with success.

The essential design principle behind a mixed border is often referred to as the “3 D’s”—Depth, Density and Diversity. Such borders are thickly planted, to give maxi-

mum floral interest (although they should still aim for one or two particular peaks—in this case, August), and they are generally wider than conventional flower beds, 15 feet being considered the minimum.

Often, they are backed by a fence or clipped hedge thus providing an enclosure or property barrier that is both interesting and useful. Plantings are never strictly arranged in terms of “low, medium and tall,” but rather, in staggered heights, occasionally bringing a tall plant to the foreground, or drifting low-growing ones a little further back, for maximum play of light and shadow. ♡

PERFECT PLANTS FOR AN AUGUST PEAK

- A. **Hydrangea**—*Hydrangea serrata* ‘Preziosa’ (1); rose flowers; 4’x5’
- B. **Butterfly bush**—*Buddleia davidii* ‘Nanho Purple’ (2); rich purple flowers; 4-6’ x 4-6’
- C. **Blazing star**—*Liatris ligulistylis* (20); rosy-purple flowers; 3-5’ x 1’
- D. **Blazing star**—*Liatris spicata* ‘Kobold’ (12); dark purple flowers; 1.5’ x 1.5’
- E. **Coneflower**—*Echinacea purpurea* ‘Magnus’ (18); carmine-rose flowers; 3.5’ x 1.5’
- F. **Mallow**—*Malva alcea* var. *fastigiata* (2); soft pink flowers; 3-4’ x 1.5’
- G. **Russian sage**—*Perovskia atriplicifolia* (5); pale lavender-blue flowers; 4’ x 2’
- H. **Sage**—*Salvia x sylvestris* ‘May Night’ (29); violet-blue flowers; 1.5-2’ x 1.5’
- I. **Rose**—*Rosa* ‘Schneekoppe’ (1); blush pink flowers; 2.5-3’ x 3’
- J. **Masterwort**—*Astrantia major* ‘Rose Symphony’ (17); rosy-pink flowers; 3-4’ x 1.5’

24'

↑
N

