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SUMMARY

Research at the 100-acre UC Davis Arboretum has yielded a list of 100 plants that are ideal for Contra Costa and other parts of California. These plants are attractive most of the year, low maintenance, low water, relatively pest free, and attractive to beneficial wildlife.

UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars

by Liz Rottger, UC Master Gardener

Arboretum All-Stars Are Garden Champions!

When we hear “All-Stars,” we think baseball. But gardeners should now start thinking of the UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars. From among the thousands of plants that grow in the beautiful, 100-acre Arboretum gardens on the UC Davis campus, over the past 25 years Arboretum staff tested and selected 100 plants that are attractive most of the year, thrive in our California climate, are low maintenance, require limited water and attract beneficial wildlife. This exciting list of 100 plants has been designated as “Arboretum All-Stars.” They will be champions in our gardens here in Contra Costa County.

Anything But Boring:

For many gardeners “drought-tolerant” is synonymous with boring. But the Arboretum All-Stars are anything but. They were tested to provide vibrant, colorful blooms over a long time, to be focal points of color and texture and to survive in the typical conditions of benign neglect that reign in most of our gardens. Quite surprisingly, **four beautiful roses** are among the All-Stars—**Iceberg**, **Grüss an Aachen**,

Perle d’Or, and **Mutabilis**—all showy, disease-resistant roses with long bloom times. A California native, ***Ceanothus maritimus* ‘Valley Violet’**, is a small shrub covered with intense purple blossoms in spring that even does well when planted next to turf. **Cape Balsam (*Bulbine frutescens*)** is a long-blooming perennial with showy yellow spikes that adds color and structure to any herbaceous border. **Coral Fountain (*Russelia equisetiformis*)** is true to its name: a show-stopping fountain of coral-red flowers from spring to autumn. It requires little maintenance and is a magnet for hummingbirds. Grasses such as **Deer Grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*)** and **Giant Feather Grass (*Stipa gigantea*)** provide a graceful accent in any garden.

Finally, what garden does not have room for a daphne? The All-Stars include ***Daphne odora* ‘Aureomarginata’**, a beautiful winter daphne with variegated leaves that spreads out to a low-growing shrub covered with the most fragrant flowers in the middle of winter.



“The All-Stars have been chosen because gardeners and non-gardeners alike can have success with these plants.”

Easy to Grow:

Arboretum All-Stars conserve water and many are naturally pest free. The majority thrive with infrequent (once or twice a month), deep irrigation, reducing runoff that can carry pollutants into creeks, rivers and the Bay. They also support beneficial insects.

Working with the California Center for Urban Horticulture, the Arboretum is now introducing All-Stars to local nurseries throughout California. The Center’s Program Manager, Melissa Borel, stated “We want every Californian to enjoy a beautiful landscape that gives back to our environment. The All-Stars have been chosen because gardeners and non-gardeners alike can have success with these plants.”

Finding the All-Stars:

Locally, you can find All-Star plants at various nurseries. And, the Willows in Concord has planted a demonstration garden with All-Stars. For every All-Star plant sold, a small sum is returned to UC Davis to help fund further research. Whatever your garden needs—trees, shrubs, vines, perennials or ground cover—the All-Stars can offer you a winner.

For More Information:

The UC Davis Arboretum web site has lots of information about the All-Stars, including a downloadable brochure with lots of growing tips and landscape suggestions for planting All-Stars in your garden. Visit:

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars>



Russelia equisetiformis (Coral Fountain) at the UC Davis Arboretum.