



Peonies

OUR 10 GARDEN GREATS

Allergic Living's
fave flowers for the
pollen-averse.

by DORY CERNY

If years of sniffles, bloodshot, itchy eyes and even wheezing have made paving over the back garden seem an appealing notion, do not despair. These gorgeous flowers are just what the horticulturalist ordered. Many of them propagate with seeds, while those that do make pollen create the kind that does not find its way into your nose and throat. Rather, they produce heavy, sticky pollen, employing insects or hummingbirds – instead of the wind – to do the pollinating.

A garden full of bright, bold blooms, butterflies and hummingbirds, and all without setting off the allergies? Sounds like a bit of paradise, *sans* pavement.

1 Prized by gardeners due to their beauty both on the stem and in a vase, **Peonies** (*Paeonia*) come in a dizzying number of varieties. All are good for allergies, but double-flowering (*P. officinalis*) and Japanese (*P. japonica*) are the best. *Perennial, spring/summer blooms, hardiness varies by type.*

2 **Hydrangea** shrubs boast big, cascading flowerheads in pink, blue, white and purple hues. Look for **Bigleaf** or **Florist's** (*Hydrangea macrophylla*) and the common **Smooth Hydrangea** (*H. arborescens*), which are safer bets in northern climes than the Pee Gee (*H. paniculata* 'Grandiflora') or the Oak Leaf (*H. querciflora*) forms. *Perennial, summer blooms, hardiness zones 3 to 8.*



3 Butterflies flock to the **Black-eyed Susan Vine** (*Thunbergia alata*), attracted by its bright yellow flowers with purple-chocolate coloured centres. It can be invasive, so plant this creeper in a contained area with a trellis for support. *Annual grown from seeds, spring/summer/early fall blooms, hardiness zones 2 to 9.*

4 Even those with no green thumb at all can grow **Impatiens** (*Impatiens walleriana*), aka **Busy Lizzie**. A fast grower that is suited to a multitude of uses, from borders to baskets, these pretty little flowers brighten up any garden and come in a wide range of colours, including shades of pink, red, orange and – for a calming effect – white. *Annual, late spring to early fall blooms, all hardiness zones.*

● environmental allergies

5 The hardest part about having **Gladiolus** (*Gladiolus*) in your garden is choosing which ones you like the most. Literally hundreds of varieties in infinite colours are available. Just watch out for slugs, which also love these majestic floral spears. *Perennial grown from corms (underground stems), blooms and hardiness vary by type.*



Gladiolus



Foxglove



Cranesbill Geranium

6 Useful as a groundcover and in rock gardens or garden pots, the easy-to-grow **Hardy** or **Cranesbill Geranium** (*Geranium sanguineum*) has bright blue, pink or magenta flowers and abundant foliage. Not to be confused with annual geraniums (*Pelargonium*). *Perennial, late spring/summer blooms, hardiness zones 4 to 8.*



Hostas

7 The shade-loving **Hosta** (*hosta*) adds lush greenery to the landscape. **Sum and Substance's** leaves range from vibrant chartreuse to gold, while **Twilight's** deep colour is offset by yellow accents. Small flowers appear in pale violet or white, most without fragrance. *Perennial, summer blooms, hardiness zones 4 to 9.*

8 For a burst of indigo when many plants are losing their buds, the fall-blossoming **Japanese Gentian** (*Gentiana scabra*) is ideal. The deep blue of **Crested Gentian** (*Gentiana septemfida*) is accented by even darker stripes inside the flower's throat. *Perennial, summer/fall blooms, hardiness zones 3 to 6.*



Gentian

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9 Tall, dramatic spikes of bell-shaped lavender flowers with speckled throats are the hallmarks of the **Foxglove** (*Digitalis purpurea*). This quick-growing plant is shade-tolerant, and its height makes it perfect for borders and densely planted areas. *Perennial, spring/summer blooms, hardiness zone 4.*



Sweet Pea

10 With a scent as delicious as its name implies, **Sweet Pea Vine** (*Lathyrus odoratus*) is an old-fashioned favourite that delights the eye with a riot of colour as it snakes up the arbour. *Annual grown from seeds, late spring/early summer blooms, all hardiness zones, but does best in cooler climates.*

Runners-up: **pansy** (*Viola*), **Madagascar periwinkle** (*Catharanthus roseus*)