

# How to have a FABBY GARDEN

## PART IX



### Gardening with Clay 1A

Look at poor Theda Bara here - she's so sad and frustrated. Theda was SO excited to start her new garden last Spring that she ran out to the nursery and bought a ton of amazing plants, and planted them before she amended that hard-pan

clay soil she's lying on there. Don't worry, Theda - we've all done it! We've even tried to delude ourselves that **the number one rule in gardening: "make your soil friable"** doesn't apply to natives, and gone and planted all-native gardens. *"Nobody is amending the soil out in nature and look how well it does!"*

Actually, native soil is probably very different from the hard-pan clay around your house. Bulldozers and trucks smashed your native soil while your house was being built, squeezing all the air spaces out. So now the roots of your plants have to work extra hard to move outwards into the soil, which cripples nutrient uptake and prevents water from draining, leading to root rot and other problems.

The good news: Clay soil is easily fixed, and you can have fabulous, well-draining soil in just a couple of years, with not too much extra work. (See our blog for more details!)

More good news - there are lots of plants that are easily **adaptable to clay**, which means they'll do well in "clay-ish" soil with some organic matter floating around below the surface, so the soil has **some draining ability**. If you can't resist the siren call of a beautiful garden before you've completely improved your soil's friability, here are a few excellent tried and true "clayish tolerant" planting suggestions that won't leave you feeling dismayed. If you can add



#### Mimulus lewisii x cardinalis

Freely blooming from late Spring through late Summer with beautiful 1.5" peppermint-pink flowers, this naturally occurring native "Monkey Flower" is EASY, reliably perennial and not fussy about drainage (CLAY tolerant!). Thriving in both sun (by the coast) to bright shade, it spreads by rhizomes to 3' across and 14" tall. Attractive, low, sage green foliage. Cut back to 3" tall after bloom. Best show on the edge of a bed (or in a pot) in rich, loamy soil. A good choice under roses. Deciduous. Hummers! Sun/Bright shade. Avg. water/Moist. Perennial USDA zones 6-10. #3579 \$8.95



#### Verbena lilacina 'De La Mina'

Love bloomiferous perennials but don't want to water? Now you can have your cake and eat it, too! Exploding into a cloud of rich lavender-blue flower clusters in Spring, this SUPER EASY, SUPER TOUGH native blooms year around, especially with an occasional drink in Summer. Valuable for both cottagey and dry gardens or large pots, it makes a dense 3' x 3' mound. Butterflies and bees! Deer resistant! Sun/Part sun (inland). Avg./Low water. Perennial USDA zones 7-10. #3398 \$7.95

### Continued ...

a bit of compost - or even better, some gravel or lava rock - to the good-sized hole you plant them in, you'll do just fine!

This doesn't mean: "Go ahead and plant in hardpan cement," like the stuff alongside your driveway (which requires a pick-axe). It means they are adaptable to "clayish" soil,

with some organic material included.

So go ahead! Try a few of our favorite tried-and-true plants on these two pages. And don't forget the compost!

Annie



#### Commelina coelestis

As vivid a turquoise as exists in the plant world! 1" 3-petaled blooms with sunny yellow anthers are almost unreal on branchy 1-2' stems Summer thru Fall with more produced every year on this "happy-just-about-anywhere" TOTALLY TOUGH dry, wet and CLAY tolerant long lived tuberous perennial. Tubers can be stored like Dahlias. Self-sows. Sun/AM sun. High/Low water. Perennial USDA zones 9-11, annual elsewhere. #275 \$6.95

#### Geum quellyon var. flora plena 'Blazing Sunset'

UNBELIEVABLY LONG BLOOMING! This is not the well-known 'Mrs. Bradshaw'. Yes, I have left 'Mrs. Bradshaw' and taken up with a much more thrilling provider! Blooms like crazy late Spring thru Fall (with deadheading). Brightest red, 2.5" blooms look like ruffly roses and dance above sturdy, lush green, compact mounds. One of the toughest, heat tolerant and longest lived perennials you'll ever grow! Compost yearly and cut back in Winter. 3' x 3'. Deer resistant! Sun/Part sun. Avg./Low water. Perennial USDA zones 4-10. #1487 \$7.95

#### Geranium maderense LIMITED! "Ginormous Geranium"

If you've never had the pleasure of growing this majestic, SUPER SIMPLE show stopper in your garden - this is the year to bring one home! There's just nothing like the massive, 4' across, spherical crown of showy pink flowers from April to mid-Summer. Blooms in year 2 but you won't mind since its large, tropicalesque leaves are stunning on their own. Self-sows reliably, adaptable to sun or shade - moist or dry! Rich, well drained soil. 4' x 4'. Drought tolerant! Sun (coast)/Bright shade. Avg. /Low water. Monocarpic USDA zones 9-11. #437 \$8.95

#### Euphorbia characias 'Dwarf'

I love this dwarf form of Euphorbia characias! To 2.5' x 3', it's half the size of the species and just the right size for any garden. And plants just don't get any easier than this! Grand, 16" x 10", bright lime-char-treuse flowering heads bring reliable late Winter and Spring thrills. Blooms till June and that luscious color combines well with so many plants. Drought tolerant, deer, pest and gopher proof! Not fussy about soil and reliably self-sows. Cut back spent spikes in Summer. Sun (coast)/Bright shade. Avg./Low water. Perennial USDA zones 7-10 #412 \$7.95

#### Echium plantagineum "Blue Bedder"

Goof-proof, bee-loved and blue, this bountiful bloomer from the Mediterranean is deer resistant, too! Fast growing into an impressive mound, 20" x 20" (in rich soil) of blue, cup-shaped blooms with pink buds, it blooms for months! Easy, resilient and not fussy about soil, it's useful in those mysterious spots where everything else dies! Readily self-sows. Drought tolerant. Sun. Avg./Low water. Annual. All zones. Cannot ship to OR. #380 \$4.95

More Clay Tolerant Cuties Online!