



Fill empty spaces with tough, easy (self-sowing) annuals for extra color!

# How to have a FABBY GARDEN



... low water does not mean ugly, ugly, ugly!

I'm guessing a lot of folks around my town think drought tolerant gardens mean zero maintenance gardens. I imagine them thinking: "I'll rip out my lawn, plant a few cactus and succulents into my (hard-pan clay) soil, sprinkle some gravel or wood chips on top and boom – I'm done! No more maintenance and no more watering! Now all my neighbors will see that I am the most water righteous guy on my block!"

When I walk my dog around the neighborhood, I see a lot of this – lawns torn out and replaced with, um ... nothing, often covered in some mulch. Or newly planted cactus and succulents stuck in the soil, surrounded by wood chips. Fast forward six months to a year later and ugh, here's what I see: Plants yellowing and not growing, even dying, and masses of weeds everywhere! Ugly, ugly, ugly.

Now, whether you're conserving water, replacing your lawn with drought tolerant plants, or have just plain quit gardening "until it rains again", I want you to know that your drought tolerant garden can be really beautiful and uplifting. You just have to know some things!

👉 **Prepare your soil first.** This is your most important step ever in gardening, and it will save you much disappointment and replacing of plants later. You want your soil to be friable (with lots of tiny air pockets) and well-draining, so roots aren't stunted and suffocated by hard clay. Roots need air to be happy and healthy, especially after transplanting. If you have solid clay, dig in a good planting mix or compost until it's at least 1/2 organic matter and 1/2 clay. Even better, add in some small gravel or lava rock to provide extra air pockets and drainage.

👉 **Plant so that once they are mature, your plants will be touching.** Try not to leave a lot of bare ground – where the soil moisture will evaporate – or plant a drought-tolerant groundcover between them. This hugely reduces the need for watering.

👉 **Most drought-tolerant plants need nourishment to grow and look good.** Side-dress

with good quality compost (1" or so) after planting, and additionally about once a year.

👉 **Water!** Your plants may not die without any water, once established, but they will grow handsomely with an occasional or monthly deep watering in Summer – especially in hotter areas.

👉 **Plant colorful hardy annuals** in Fall/late Winter between your larger tough guys. They'll get well-watered from the rains, and deliver plenty of heart-thumping thrills come Spring. Plus, they'll self-sow to return each new season.

👉 **Weed regularly** – every weed you pull now saves pulling 100's later!

You are *not limited* to cactus and succulents, or even drought tolerant plants! See that middle-left photo on the previous page? That's a 6' x 8' cut-flower garden in my backyard, with mostly cottage garden annuals. This past year, *I watered it once every 1 to 2 weeks* (once established), depending on the heat. I have very good, loamy soil and planted my starts close together in Spring, about 10-12" apart. After planting, I top-dressed any bare soil with 2" of compost. Not only does the compost reduce water evaporation, it also keeps roots cool and well fed, so your plants are happy and healthy. As the plants grow, the close planting creates a solid mass of foliage, shading the soil and keeping it moist and cool. Plus, it practically eliminates weeding!

Annie



Fill in all your empty spaces! Low, colorful and spready succulents like bright chartreuse *Sedum x adolphii* (online) and low, flat (and hardy!) emerald groundcover *Delosperma nubigenum* (trailing top rear left, available online) are easy and totally useful, preventing water loss and weeds.



Crowding and compost – so you can have your cut flowers and low water, too!



## Graptopetia 'Crested Form' syn. 'Fred Ives Crested'

The FIRST succulent I ever came to love! EASY to grow, rare and wondrous, this crested form creates super dense mounds, 1' tall and up to 3' across, made up of hundreds of small, tightly packed leaves in a glorious array of sunset colors: amber, gold, lavender, and rose. Unbeatable in a container or as edging for a well drained rock, succulent or dry garden. Add a bit of compost once a year for perfect appearance. **Deer resistant and drought tolerant!** Sun. Avg./Low water. Perennial USDA zones 8-11. #3243 \$10.95 3+ \$10.50



## Cotyledon orbiculata var. oblonga 'Flavida'

Adding plenty of interest and **textural goodness**, eye-catching silvery-blue, chalky, finger-like leaves form a distinctive, dense clump or slowly spreading groundcover that looks great all year around. **EASY, tough and low maintenance in well drained gardens** and containers (10+ gal), hummingbirds make a bee-line for those lovely, umbrella-like clusters of flaring 1.5" apricot bells held well above the foliage on upright, 12-18" stems. **Drought tolerant and deer resistant.** Hardy to mid 20's F. Sun/Part sun (inland). Avg./Low water. Perennial succulent USDA zones 9-11. #3853 \$8.95 3+ \$8.50



## Aristea major

Majestic, brawny and beautiful at 4' tall and 3" thick, the clubby, gentian blue spikes of this S. African Iris relative show up just in time for Mother's Day and last several months! **Architectural, SUPER tough and drought tolerant, the evergreen**, upright, spiky foliage to 3' wide lends year-round textural and vertical interest. Easy and rewarding in any garden – even **parking strips.** **Clay and sand tolerant**, give an annual 2" side-dress of compost for best show. **Deer resistant** and snail proof! Sun. Avg./Low water. Perennial bulb USDA zones 8b-11. #110 \$8.95 3+ \$8.50

## Linaria reticulata 'Flamenco'

**Long-blooming, scented, drought tolerant, snail and deer resistant**, this flamboyant annual from North Africa self-sows, too! Gobs of bright little scarlet and gold, bi-colored "snapdragon" blooms are displayed for months above soft, ferny foliage. Cut back after bloom and it'll re-bloom quickly and vigorously. To 12" x 12", it's a stunning container subject. Sun. Avg./Low water. Annual. All zones. #611 \$4.95 3+ \$4.50



## 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 3+ \$4.50