

Flowering Plants That Look Beautiful Even When They're Not in Bloom

Begonia



There are hundreds of great varieties of begonias, says Dave Whiting, the executive director of the National Gardening Association in Southlake, Texas. One standout: Rex, with its shiny foliage that blends blue-green, silver-gray, and burgundy purple. Also noteworthy: Angel Wing begonias, which boast otherworldly, white-spotted leaves.

Blue Star Arkansas



Blue star Arkansas (*Amsonia hubrichtii*) produces sky-blue flowers that [attract pollinators](#) for several weeks in spring, but the show's not over when the blooms are gone. This plant has fine-textured green foliage that's really hard to get with other varieties. In the fall, the plant evolves to a bright yellow-gold.

Coleus



Coleus has such stunning foliage that many gardeners cut the plants' tiny blooms, or inflorescence, as it appears to conserve energy, Whiting says. Their gorgeous leaves are available in every color you can imagine, from red and orange to blackish-purple. Easy to grow and propagate, coleus is a great plant to share and trade with friends.

Coral Bells 'Palace Purple'



The leaves on coral bells 'Palace Purple' (*Heuchera micrantha* var. *diversifolia* 'Palace Purple') range from olive and bronze-green to deep purple, with wine-red underneath. "So when there's a breeze, you get different colors bopping around," Whiting says. The flowers are pretty, too, blooming in tiny pinkish-white blossoms that pop against the plant's dark leaves.

Daphne 'Carol Mackie'



Daphne 'Carol Mackie' (Daphne x burkwoodii 'Carol Mackie') has pretty, variegated leaves edged in creamy white and maintains its pleasing mounded shape with little to no pruning, says horticulturist Dawn Fradkin with Colorado State University Extension in Arapahoe County. Small, white blossoms tinged with pink bloom in spring and can come back as a smaller flush in late summer or early fall.

Hosta



The Miss Congeniality of the plant world, hostas are easy to grow, [thrive in shade](#), and come in a huge range of shapes, colors, textures, and sizes. Whiting's favorites: Blue Mouse Ears, a miniature with tightly curled blue-green leaves, and Guacamole, with big, variegated leaves in apple-green with dark green margins. Resist the urge to clear out foliage too early as the season wanes, Fradkin says: "Your leaves are still photosynthesizing energy and putting it into the roots for next season, so if you just let those leaves die out naturally, you're going to have a better show next year."

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Crepe Myrtle



They're known for producing months of summer flowers, but crepe myrtle shrubs (*Lagerstroemia indica*) also offer stunning fall foliage in shades of red, yellow, and orange—and their pinkish-gray bark peels to cinnamon-colored layers in winter. Newer varieties have foliage that stays red all season long.

Jacob's Ladder



Exotic, dark green foliage with cream-yellow margins makes Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium*) a garden favorite. Bell-shaped blue flowers bloom from late spring into summer, but it's beautiful whether it has flowers or not, says Fradkin.

Ninebark‘AmberJubilee'



The versatile ninebark shrub (*Physocarpus opulifolius*), which peels back in layers of cinnamon, charcoal, and gray bark throughout winter, has a lot going for it. New foliage colors developed over the past decade have made it even cooler. For example, Amber Jubilee, sprouts flaming orange leaves that shift to bright green in summer and burgundy in autumn. Pink or white flowers bloom from May to June, adding one more act to this year-round show.

Persian Shield



With its metallic purple, green, and black foliage, Persian shield (*Strobilanthes*) makes a gorgeous garden plant in warmer zones and a flashy annual in colder ones. It's also popular as a houseplant; its purple flowers tend to bloom in winter.

Sweet Potato Vine



Popular as a companion to upright plants in large containers, sweet potato vine (*Ipomoea batatas*) is a sprawling ornamental vine with distinctive purple leaves. "If you've got a big area you want to cover, it's also good for that," Whiting says.