



Water Resources Department

# Drought Tolerant Plants

## - For the WaterSmart Landscape

Growing landscape plants in the ever-changing Kansas environment can be a challenge, but add drought to the equation and that challenge can become quite intense! Creating a drought tolerant and water smart landscape consists of more than just choosing the right plant for the right place (a critical step!); it involves the combination of sound gardening principles that together support a resilient landscape. **Remember, drought tolerant does not mean plant it and forget it...All plants require moisture to become established!** Following is a list of plants that have shown to do well under adverse and droughty environmental conditions.

### TREES

#### Large Deciduous Trees (over 45' at maturity):

American Elm (*Ulmus americana*)  
Bur Oak (*Quercus macrocarpa*)  
Chinkapin Oak (*Quercus muehlenbergii*)  
Hackberry (*Celtis occidentalis*)  
Honeylocust (*Cleditsia triacanthos var. inermis*)  
Kentucky Coffeetree (*Gymnocladus dioicus*)

#### Medium Deciduous Trees (30-45' at maturity):

Goldenraintree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*)  
Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)  
Osage Orange (*Maclura pomifera*)  
Sawtooth Oak (*Quercus acutissima*)

#### Small Deciduous Trees (under 30' at maturity):

Flowering Crabapple (*Malus sylvestris*)  
Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)  
Thornless Cockspur Hawthorn (*Crataegus crusgalli var. inermis*)  
Washington Hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*)  
Winter King Hawthorn (*Crataegus viridis*)

#### Evergreen Trees :

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)  
Junipers (avoid *J. scopulorum cultivars*)  
Ponderosa Pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)  
Pinyon Pine (*Pinus edulis*)

### SHRUBS

#### Large Deciduous Shrubs (over 8' at maturity):

Beauty Bush (*Kolkwitzia amabilis*)  
Border Privet (*Ligustrum obtusifolium*)  
Lilac (Common and Chinese) (*Syringa spp.*)  
Gray Dogwood (*Cornus racemosa*)  
Ninebark (*Physocarpus opulifolius*)  
Peking Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster acutifolius*)  
Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*)  
Roughleaf Dogwood (*Cornus drummondii*)  
Snowball Bush Viburnum (*Viburnum opulus*)  
Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)  
Vanhoutte Spirea (*Spiraea × vanhouttei*)

#### Medium Deciduous Shrubs (4-8' at maturity):

Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia davidii*)  
Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles speciosa*)  
Forsythia (*Forsythia spp.*)  
Fragrant Sumac (*Rhus aromatica*)  
Golden Currant (*Ribes aureum*)  
Barberry (Japanese and Mentor) (*Berberis spp.*)  
Mockorange (*Philadelphus spp.*)  
Meyer's Lilac (also sold as Korean Lilac) (*Syringa meyeri*)  
Snowmound Spirea (*Spiraea nipponica*)  
Spreading Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster divaricatus*)



### **Small Deciduous Shrubs (under 4' at maturity):**

Alpine Currant (*Ribes alpinum*)  
Bluemist (also sold as Bluemist Spirea)  
(*Caryopteris x clandonensis*)  
Bumald Spirea (*Spiraea x bumalda*)  
Chenault Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos* × *chenaultii*)  
Crimson Pygmy Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)  
Gro Low Sumac (*Rhus aromatica* 'Gro-Low')  
Indian Currant Coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*)  
Japanese Flowering Quince (*Chaenomeles japonica*)  
Kobold Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii* 'Kobold')  
Snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*)  
Saint John's Wort (i.e. 'Blue Velvet')  
(*Hypericum* spp.)

### **Evergreen Shrubs**

Junipers (avoid *J. scopulorum* cultivars)

### **Perennial Flowers**

Aster (*Symphyotrichum* spp.)  
Bee Balm (*Monarda* spp.)  
Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*)  
Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*)  
Coreopsis (Tickseed) (*Coreopsis* spp.)  
Daylily (*Hemerocallis* spp.)  
Dianthus (*Dianthus* spp.)  
Gaillardia (*Gaillardia x grandiflora*)  
Garden Phlox (*Phlox paniculata*)  
Iris (*Iris x germanica*)  
Lamb's Ear (*Stachys byzantina*)  
Peony (*Paeonia* spp.)  
Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)  
Russian Sage (*Salvia yangii*, *Perovskia atriplicifolia*)  
Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
Salvia (*Salvia* spp.)  
Sedum ('Autumn Joy') (*Hylotelephium spectabile*,  
*Sedum spectabile*)  
Shasta Daisy (*Leucanthemum x superbum*)  
Spiderwort (*Tradescantia ohiensis*)  
Yarrow (*Achillea* spp.)

### **Annual Flowers**

Ageratum (*Ageratum* spp.)  
Celosia (*Celosia* spp.)  
Cosmos (*Cosmos* spp.)  
Gaillardia (*Gaillardia pulchella*)  
Geranium (*Pelargonium x hortorum*)  
Gomphrena (*Gomphrena globosa*)  
Lantana (*Lantana* spp.)  
Marigold (*Tagetes* spp.)  
Petunia (*Petunia* spp.)  
Portulaca (*Portulaca* spp.)  
Rudbeckia (*Rudbeckia hirta*)  
Salvia (*Salvia* spp.)  
Snapdragon (*Antirrhinum majus*)  
Verbena (*Verbena* spp.)  
Zinnia (*Zinnia* spp.)

### **Herbs**

Artemisia (*Artemisia* spp.)  
Basil (*Ocimum basilicum*)  
Germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*)  
Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*)  
Hollyhock (*Alcea rosea*)  
Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*)  
Lemon Balm (*Melissa officinalis*)  
Marjoram (*Origanum majorana*)  
Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)  
Oregano (*Origanum* spp.)  
Sage (*Salvia officinalis*)  
Thyme (*Thymus* spp.)

### **Ornamental Grasses**

Big Bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*)  
Blue Fescue ('Elijia Blue', etc.) (*Festuca glauca*)  
Feather Reed Grass ('Karl Forester') (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora*)  
Hardy Fountain Grass (*Cenchrus alopecuroides*)  
Hardy Pampas (*Tripsidium ravennae*)  
Indiangrass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)  
Porcupine Grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Strictus')  
Blue Grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*)  
Sideoats Grama (*Bouteloua curtipendula*)  
Switchgrass ('Northwind', etc.) (*Panicum virgatum*)



## **Groundcovers**

Hen and Chicks (*Sempervivum tectorum*)  
Liriope ('Big Blue') (*Liriope muscari*)  
Mother of Thyme (*Thymus praecox*)  
Perennial Geranium (*Geranium sanguineum*)  
Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*)  
Sedum, Creeping (Stonecrop) (*Sedum spp.*)  
Sweet William (*Dianthus spp.*)

## **Turf**

Buffalograss (*Bouteloua dactyloides*)  
Bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*)



This is not an all-inclusive list, but rather a place to start when choosing plants for your “WaterSmart” Landscape.

***Remember, drought tolerant does not mean “plant it and forget it”!***

All plants require moisture to get established and depending on the plant, this establishment period could take up to two years or more.

**[www.watersmarthays.com](http://www.watersmarthays.com)**

## **The Seven Steps of WaterSmart Landscaping:**

- 1. Planning and Design**
- 2. Soil Preparation**
- 3. Efficient Irrigation**
- 4. Mulch**
- 5. Right Plant, Right Place**
- 6. Practical Turf Areas**
- 7. Proper Maintenance**

## **Additional Resources:**

Dyck Arboretum of the Plains Plant Library - <https://dyckarboretum.org/native-plants/#!/all>

Plants Recommended for Kansas (KSRE) - <https://hnr.k-state.edu/extension/info-center/recommended-plants/>

Kansas Roots (KSRE) - <https://www.kansasroots.org/>

North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox - <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/>