



William T. Kemper Center for Home Gardening

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Rock Gardens

Gardeners who enjoy growing a wide variety of plants are the best advocates of rock gardens. This type of garden can contain a mixture of evergreens, deciduous shrubs, bulbs, perennials and annuals. Collectively, the design they create is a myriad of color, form and texture.

Rocks, purchased or on-hand should provide the basic framework of the design. The best arrangement will look as if nature had a hand in it's creation. Observation of natural outcroppings along highways and hillsides can be copied on a miniature scale. Group small rocks together to give the impression of larger masses worn away by time and weathering. Medium stones should be used in groups of two or three. Bury large boulders halfway in the ground for stability. Cohesiveness is best achieved by using only one kind of rock in the garden. Limestone and sandstone are the two types readily available in this area.

The soil in a rock garden should be well-drained with only a moderate amount of humus or compost. Most rock garden plants do not like rich soil or heavy fertilization. Well-rotted manure, worked around the crown of the plant in early spring, is sufficient feeding for the growing season.

Good rock garden plants are drought resistant making them choice candidates for hard-to-water areas such as slopes and shallow ground. Water deeply and allow soil to dry thoroughly. Watering is most efficiently done in early morning or evening. Rocks hold moisture and release it slowly. Crevices around them provide planting spaces for those plants requiring more than the average amount of moisture. Mulching helps to control weeds and keeps the soil cooler. Mulched beds reduce water splashing on the plants lessening the chance of fungal problems during hot muggy days and nights. Rock gardens are traditionally thought of as positioned on a slope in full sun. An east or west exposure can provide a respite from all day sun.

Some reliable plants for the rock garden include the evergreens and conifers which come in many shades of green, blue and yellow. *Juniperus squamata* 'Blue Star' has bright blue dense foliage all year. Mature height is 14 inches by the same width. *Pinus strobus* 'Nana' (Dwarf White Pine) is an irregular globe of soft green needles growing to about 3 feet tall with an ultimate spread of 6 feet. *Thuja occidentalis* 'Tom Thumb' (Dwarf American Arborvitae) has flattened green foliage. This tight little globe achieves a mature height of 14 inches tall by 12 inches wide.

Deciduous shrubs have a dual purpose. They give us lovely flowers and their twiggy appearance in winter provides variety in texture. *Spiraea japonica* 'Alpina' grows to only 14 inches high with a profusion of pink flowers in late spring. *Deutzia crenata* 'Nikko' gently sprawls over the ground barely achieving one foot in height. This little gem is covered with white flowers in early spring.

Try some perennials in the rock garden. *Anemone pulsatilla* (Pasque flower) is one of the earliest bloomers. This plant produces ferny foliage with purple, red or white flowers. The foliage stays nice all summer. *Geranium sanguineum* (Hardy Geranium) develops a spreading mound of finely cut leaves with many bright

pink flowers in mid-spring. The foliage will turn red in autumn. *Herniaria glabra* (Rupturewort) makes a great ground cover. Good between stepping stones, the dark green tiny leaves will become topped with white flowers in early spring. *Oenothera macrocarpa* (Missouri Primrose) is a sprawling native glade plant which provides night blooming sulfur-yellow flowers all summer.

Add small bulbs such as anemones, snowdrops, scilla and grape hyacinths. Miniature narcissus and botanical tulips return reliably each year and complete the bulb collection. Annuals of small stature such as pinks, ageratum and verbena give the summer season a color boost.

The extensive array of plants to choose from for rock gardens truly offer the opportunity to satisfy the palette of every gardener. The following list of plants are especially noted for their adaptability to rock gardens in the Midwest.

Plants for a Midwestern Rock Garden

Bulbs

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Anemone blanda</i>	Windflower
<i>Allium aflatunense</i>	Ornamental Onion
<i>Chionodoxa sardensis</i>	Glory-of-the-Snow
<i>Crocus vernus</i> 'Purpurea'	Dutch Crocus
<i>Iris danfordiae</i>	Bulbous Iris
<i>Iris reticulata</i>	Bulbous Iris
<i>Narcissus cyclamineus</i> 'February Gold'	Daffodil
<i>Narcissus cyclamineus</i> 'Peeping Tom'	Daffodil
<i>Narcissus cyclamineus</i> 'Tete-A-Tete'	Daffodil
<i>Narcissus jonquilla</i> 'Suzy'	Jonquil
<i>Narcissus</i> 'W. P. Milner'	Daffodil
<i>Tulipa batalinii</i>	Tulip
<i>Tulipa greigii</i> 'Heart's Delight'	Tulip
<i>Tulipa praestans</i> 'Fusilier'	Tulip
<i>Tulipa</i> (species)	Tulip

Spring Annuals

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Agrostis nebulosa</i>	Cloud Grass
<i>Linaria maroccana</i>	Toadflax
<i>Viola tricolor</i>	Johnny-Jump-Up

Shrubs

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Berberis thunbergii</i> 'Kobold'	Japanese Barberry
<i>Buxus microphylla</i> 'Koreana Wintergreen'	Boxwood
<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i> 'Perpusilis'	Rock Cotoneaster
<i>Forsythia viridissima</i> 'Bronxensis'	Golden-Bells
<i>Fothergilla gardenii</i>	Witch Alder
<i>Genista</i> x 'Lydia'	Broom
<i>Stephanandra incisa</i> 'Crispa'	Lace Shrub

Perennials

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acanthus mollis</i> 'Latifolus'	Bear's-Breeches
<i>Anemone pulsatilla</i>	Pasqueflower
<i>Arabis alpina</i> 'Snowcap'	Rockcress
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> 'Lambrook Siler'	Wormwood
<i>Artemisia schmidtiana</i> 'Silver Mound'	Mugwort
<i>Campanula persicifolia</i>	Bellflower
<i>Coreopsis verticillata</i> 'Moonbeam'	Tickseed Coreopsis
<i>Dianthus alpinus</i> 'Alwoodii'	Alpine Pink
<i>Dianthus graniticus</i>	Granite Pink
<i>Dianthus grantianopolitanus</i> 'Tiny Rubies'	Cheddar Fmk
<i>Engelmannia pinnatifida</i>	Engelmann Daisy
<i>Euphorbia myrsinites</i>	Myrtle Euphorbia
<i>Geranium renardii</i>	Alligator Leaf Geranium
<i>Geranium sanguineum</i>	Hardy Geranium
<i>Geranium macrorrhizum</i>	Big Root Geranium
<i>Gypsophila repens</i>	Creeping Baby's Breath
<i>Herniaria glabra</i>	Common Rupturewort
<i>Iberis sempervirens</i>	Candytuft
<i>Papaver atlanticum</i>	Atlantic Poppy
<i>Oenothera macrocarpa</i>	Missouri Evening Primrose
<i>Potentilla nepalensis</i>	Nepal Cinquefoil
<i>Potentilla recta</i> 'Warrenii'	Cinquefoil
<i>Potentilla tabernaemontana</i>	Spring Cinquefoil
<i>Salvia jurisicii</i>	Salvia
<i>Salvia superba</i>	Perennial Salvia
<i>Saponaria ocymoides</i>	Rock Soapwort
<i>Stachys byzantina</i>	Lamb's Ear
<i>Verbascum chaixii</i> 'Album'	Chaix Mullein
<i>Veronica alpina</i> 'Alba'	Alpine Speedwell
<i>Veronica incana</i>	Woolly Speedwell
<i>Veronica teucrium</i> 'Crater Lake Blue'	Hungarian Speedwell
<i>Veronica longifolia</i> 'Subsessilis'	Clump Speedwell

Annuals

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Ageratum x hybridum</i>	Flossflower
<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	Snapdragon
<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i> 'Sunny Red' & 'Sunny Gold'	Cosmos
<i>Dyssodia tenuiloba</i>	Dahlberg Daisy
<i>Evolvulus x 'Blue Daze'</i>	Evolvulus
<i>Gomphrena globosa</i> 'Buddy'	Globe Amaranth
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet Alyssum
<i>Verbena x 'Aphrodite'</i>	Vervain
<i>Zinnia angustifolia</i>	Narrowleaf Zinnia

Fall Blooming Annuals

Scientific Name

Allium senescens 'Glaucum'

Chrysanthemum 'Golden Dream'

Common Name

Curly Chives

Garden Mum