

Clay Soil

Clay soils are common throughout Minnesota. Master Gardeners are often asked what plants will grow best in these heavy soils.

Compiled by Roberta Smith, Carver/Scott County Master Gardener. Roberta says, "After reviewing many publications on gardening in clay soil, this is a list that I have come up with. I have successfully used all of these plants in my Carver County clay soil for a number of years."



Carver Co. Master Gardener Roberta Smith's front yard garden shows many perennials that grow well in clay soil.



Purple coneflower and perovskia (background) are tough perennials for clay soil.

Botanical Name	Common Name	Height	Comments, Hardiness Zone
Perennials			
<i>Aquelegia canadensis</i>	columbine	1-3'	Native; self seeds; attracts hummingbirds; Z2*.
<i>Aster novae-angliae</i>	New England aster	1-5'	Native; nectar source for butterflies; blooms late; Z4.
<i>Baptisia australis</i>	blue false indigo	3-5'	Shrub-like when mature; attractive seed pods; Z3.
<i>Belamcanda chinensis</i>	blackberry lily	2-4'	Reseeds; dried seedheads great in fall arrangements; Z5.
<i>Calamagrostis xacutiflora</i> 'Karl Foerster'	feather reedgrass	3-4'	Ornamental grass adds all-season interest; Z4.
<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	purple coneflower	2-4'	Native; long bloom season; nectar source for butterflies; Z3.
<i>Eryngium yuccifolium</i>	rattlesnake master	3-4'	Native; unusual, spiky white golf ball flowers; Z4.
<i>Geranium maculatum</i>	wild cranesbill	1-2'	Native; blooms May/June, orange/red fall foliage; Z3.
<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	oxeye	3-5'	Native; long-lasting blooms; reseeds; good in arrangements; Z4.
<i>Hemerocallis</i> spp.	daylily	1-3'	Stabilizes slopes; gorgeous in mass plantings; edible petals; Z3.
<i>Liatriis</i> spp.	blazing star, gayfeather	2-5'	Native; stiff spikes of feathery flowers; attracts butterflies; Z3.
<i>Linum perenne</i>	perennial flax	1-2'	Self-seeds; shear back after flowering to promote regrowth; Z5.
<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	bergamot, bee balm	2-4'	Native; spreads; attracts bees, butterflies, hummingbirds; Z4.
<i>Parthenium integrifolium</i>	wild quinine	4-5'	Native; white flowers with long bloom period; Z4.
<i>Perovskia atriplicifolia</i>	Russian sage	3-4'	Low maintenance shrub; drought tolerant; fragrant; Z4.
<i>Ratibida pinnata</i>	gray headed coneflower	3-5'	Native; reseeds; attracts butterflies; drought tolerant; Z4.
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	black-eyed Susan	3-4'	Native; reseeds; attracts butterflies; winter interest; Z4.
<i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i>	little bluestem	2-4'	Native; great fall color; adds texture to winter garden; Z4.
<i>Sedum</i> spp.	stonecrop	1-3'	Many varieties available; drought tolerant; good fall color; Z3.
<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	cupplant	5-7'	Native; provides food, water, and cover for birds; Z4.
<i>Zizia aurea</i>	golden alexander	1-3'	Native; yellow spring flowers; larval food for butterflies; Z4.
Shrubs			
<i>Aronia melanocarpa</i>	black chokeberry	5-8'	Native shrub; white flowers in spring; berries in fall; Z3.
<i>Cornus sericea</i>	red osier dogwood	5-12'	Native; spreads; drought tolerant; deep red stem/twigs; Z3.
<i>Diervilla lonicera</i>	dwarf bush honeysuckle	2-3'	Native; spreads; good bank cover; low maintenance; fall color; Z3.
<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>	lilac	8-15'	Spring is here when the fragrant lilac blooms; Z2.

*refers to hardiness zone; southern Minnesota is Zone 4, central and northern Minnesota are Zone 3; far north and Canada are Zone 2