

OKLAHOMA HEAT LOVERS

They scoff at the heat. They laugh at drought. They flourish in the beastly Oklahoma days of July and August. What are these creatures?

They are the heat-loving plants of Oklahoma. Most are Oklahoma natives. Some are Oklahoma Proven*. You will love them in your gardens and landscapes. Deep-rooted, they require minimal watering, minimal maintenance. Colorful, they attract a bevy of pollinators from native bees to butterflies and moths. They provide seeds and nesting sites for songbirds. Many even provide blooms for your bouquets.

You may know the garden stalwarts: Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia*), Black-Eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia*), *Coreopsis* and *Coneflower* (*Echinacea*). For different shapes and textures, try *Gaura* (*Gaura lindheimeri*) with delicate flowers that dance on long stems above its foliage. Or, plant *Blazing Star* (*Liatris spp.*) with feathery stalks and purple flowers. Clumps of *Blue False Indigo* provide soothing, blue-green foliage and, when flowers are pollinated, provide dark seed capsules that rattle in the autumn winds.

For spiky leaves, consider the imposing *Yucca* (*Yucca filamentosa*) with evergreen foliage and winter seed pods or the *Red Texas Star* (*Ipomopsis rubra*) which, despite its name, is actually an Oklahoma native.



Siskiyou Pink Gaura
(*Gaura lindheimeri*
'Siskiyou Pink')



Blue False Indigo
(*Baptisia Australis*)



Red Texas Star
(*Ipomopsis rubra*)

Need perennial ground covers? Try *Wine Cups*, often called *Purple Poppy Mallow* (*Callirhoe involucrata*). With its long tap root, this Oklahoma native produces magenta blooms from mid-spring to fall. Or, plant a butterfly favorite, *Verbena* (*Verbena Canadensis*, especially the Homestead Purple cultivar). It's an Oklahoma Proven* perennial, blooming from spring to frost, slowing down only slightly during the hottest months. Another Oklahoma Proven* selection is *Evening*

Primrose (*Oenothera macrocarpa*, especially the 'Comanche Campfire' cultivar) which adds variety to the garden with silver foliage and bright yellow blooms. Requiring very little water, this one can be used in a xeriscape garden.



Wine Cups
(*Callirhoe involucrata*)



Verbena
(*Verbena*
Canadensis
'Homestead Purple')



Evening Primrose
(*Oenothera*
macrocarpa)

When the Oklahoma wind comes sweepin' down the plains, nothing captures our attention like our deep rooted, native bunch grasses swaying to the rhythms of the weather. Even when beaten down by severe storms, they spring back to shape. Their subtle shadings create a backdrop for bolder colors of the garden and offer soft autumn tones and seed heads that often persist through the cold winter.



Little Bluestem
(*Schizachyrium scoparium*)



Switchgrass (*Panicum*
virgatum)



Prairie Dropseed
(*Sporobolus heterolepsis*)
with Purple Coneflowers

Perfect for sunbaked areas, Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*) sports slender blue-green leaves with purple-bronze seedheads in late summer. Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*) is a true wind-dancer. It shows off best in mid-summer when pink-tinted flower panicles rise above the leaves in delicate clouds. Perhaps the most ornamental of our native prairie grasses is Prairie Dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepsis*). It presents a mounding shape graced by flowers that are uniquely fragrant. Some say the scent has hints of coriander, some say it's more a mix of cilantro and fresh roasted nuts.

Native perennials not only thrive, they return year after year. They amaze with their resilience as well as their beauty. So, don't let brutal summer discourage

you from your dreams of gardening. There is an Oklahoma native for any gardening situation.

Click on the links below for more information and pictures of Oklahoma natives.

[Oklahoma Proven plants](#)

[Oklahoma Native Plants, Master Gardener article in Tulsa World 2014](#)

[Drought Tolerant Plant Selections, OCES fact sheet E-1037](#)

[Heat Loving Plants of Oklahoma HLA-6444](#)