



# SHORT, SWEET, TOUGH

*These varieties not only will weather Wyoming's worst, they'll flourish!*

*By Amy Fluet*

Here are some short, drought-tolerant plants whose good looks will charm you.

They are great for the front of a sunny perennial border, along a path, or for any empty spot that needs added interest without a lot of added water. Can you tell which is which?

### **Hens and chicks (*Sempervivum* spp.)**

- The leaves of this plant come in varying shades of green and reddish purple; some are webbed.
- The translation of its genus name ("always living") alludes to this plant's tough-as-nails personality.
- Although happy clumps of this plant will grow broader each year, plants can easily be removed or divided to create new plantings.
- Otherworldly flower spikes arise from these succulents; flowering rosettes are destined to die, but there are always plenty of offspring to fill in the resulting gaps.



**Mat penstemons** (photo of *Penstemon davidsonii* v. *menziesii* 'Microphyllus')

- In contrast to their loftier cousins, these penstemons hug the ground but still have the same sturdy disposition and preference for well-draining soils that haven't been enriched with fertilizers or compost.
- Their blue to blue-purple tubular flowers stand a few inches above the foliage.
- Foliage for some of these penstemons can take on reddish hues in the fall and winter and can provide a good backdrop for smaller early-spring bulbs.
- These penstemons will grow broader with time, but they rarely seem to reseed.
- Another great species is *P. procumbens* 'Claude Barr'.



**White heath aster 'Snow Flurry' (*Aster ericoides* 'Snow Flurry')**

- Although snow flurries in the fall aren't uncommon in our state, this is one early snow flurry that is a welcome sight as this low-growing aster becomes smothered with small, white, daisy-like flowers.
- This plant stays low to the ground and provides a subtle green presence in the summer garden.
- Its wandering branches, which are covered in tiny, green leaves, look good cascading over walls or rocks or meandering along the edge of a path or sidewalk.
- 'Snow Flurry' grows densely enough it can help suppress weeds in the garden.



**Hardy yellow iceplant (*Delosperma nubigenum*)**

- Native to cold, high regions of South Africa, this plant is currently the hardiest of this genus of succulents.
- Its mat-forming, fleshy leaves are a bright shade of green and can turn shades of reddish purple in the fall.
- Shining yellow flowers carpet the plant in early summer with sporadic reblooming later in the season.
- The daisy-like flowers of this plant close on cloudy days.

**Curlicue sage (*Artemisia* 'Seafoam')**

- Despite its variety name, this member of the sage family does not need an ocean to feel at home.
- The undulating, finely cut foliage looks great with pinks and purples and is a good contrast for tall, spiky flowers and grasses.
- The flowers on curlicue sage are insignificant and can be cut off if they appear at all.



- While we see sage in the landscape around us, the variety 'Seafoam' was originally brought into this country from England by noted regional plantswoman Lauren Springer Ogden.

#### **Speedwell (*Veronica* spp.)**

- This genus contains many low-growing and drought-tolerant species such as *V. pectinata* and *V. liwanensis*.
- These mat-forming plants bloom in early spring in shades of blue and make great companions for bulbs.
- Single plants can grow quite wide (up to 24 inches), but these species seem reluctant to reseed.
- Speedwell works well along paths, at the edge of a border, or in any spot that needs filling in.

#### **Silver-edged horehound (*Marrubium rotundifolium*)**

- A close relative of this plant is used to make horehound candy.

**Amy Fluet** is currently doing a good job of keeping her plant obsession under control. She can be reached at (307) 745-0002 or at [fluet@earththlink.net](mailto:fluet@earththlink.net).

**Answers:** 1. Hardy yellow iceplant; 2. Mat penstemon; 3. Hens and chicks; 4. White heath aster; 5. Partridge feather; 6. Silver-edged horehound; 7. Curlicue sage; 8. Speedwell

- Unlike other members of this genus, this species will grow wide but won't reseed all over your garden beds.
- This plant is not grown for its flowers, which can be cut off soon after they appear. Instead, enjoy the woolly rounded leaves (which give the species its name) that are edged in silvery white.
- Silver-edged horehound is evergreen; in the spring, a quick rub with gloved hands gets rid of tattered leaves.

#### **Partridge feather (*Tanacetum densum* ssp. *amani*)**

- The interesting shape of the leaves of this plant is the source of its common name.
- This is another plant that grows wide but doesn't seem to reseed.
- Its foliage is a good backdrop for early-spring bulbs. Yellow button-shaped flowers can be cut back to show off the foliage to full effect.