

BARNYARDS & BACKYARDS



Add these blues to cure landscaping blahs

Blue is my favorite color, but the selection in landscaping plants is somewhat limited. Here are some recommendations.

Fall-planted Bulbs for Spring Color

Bulbs can be added to almost any landscape. They can be planted under trees, since they do not have deep roots. They grow in full sun to partial shade and can be massed or clumped to provide specific bold color or mixed with other annuals or perennials to add color early in the year, giving way to the other colors later.

The grape hyacinth (*Muscari armeniacum*) may come to mind first. This small, grape-colored flower is one of the first to bloom in the spring and is very adaptable. It can be used in many types of plantings and can be mixed with other plants or used in a mass planting like a blue meandering stream to give that special "wow!" effect.

And of course, do not forget the crocus. This bulb is deer- and squirrel-resistant. The short, 2- to 3-inch bluish-lavender flowers



Striped squill

can add a nice buffer or border to a flower bed.

Another small bulb to consider is the Siberian squill (*Scilla siberica*). This short, blue flower is cold-hardy, deer-resistant and fairly drought-tolerant. It is a fairly long-lived perennial. To get the most from its color, plant this small-flowered bulb densely.

The striped squill (*Puschkinia scilloides*) has a bluish color from a distance. It is 4 to 6 inches tall with fragrant, single, nodding, star-like flowers. This self-seeding bulb, like most of these, naturalizes well.

Glory of the snow (*Chionodoxa luciliae*) is another of the first bulbs to come out in the spring. This small bulb has three to six pale-blue, star-like flowers with white centers. With its 6-inch height and green foliage, glory of the snow does not need to be planted as densely as Siberian squill.

For a taller bulb, look at azure allium (*Allium caeruleum*), which is prized for its deep, clear-blue flower heads. Azure allium is one of the few true-blue flowers in the plant kingdom. This plant blooms late spring to early summer and grows up to 2 feet high and makes great cut flowers. Azure allium is easy to grow and deer-resistant. Between the round blue seed head and the green glass-like



Big blue sea holly

foliage, this plant can really add to a flower bed.

A Blue Annual and Perennial

For an annual, look into baby blue eyes (*Nemophila*). This quick-bloomer is beloved for its gorgeous, soft blue blooms that bring early color to the flower garden. The 4- to 12-inch plants provide about a month of bloom, depending on soil type and moisture. This is a good choice for areas that start off bare and later fill with perennial plants.

For something really different, try perennial big blue sea holly (*Eryngium yabellii*), which is fabulous for hot, dry spots. 'Big Blue' has green, thistle-like foliage and blooms with huge 4-inch diameter bracts that surround the flower's blue center cone. Big blue sea holly is an excellent cut flower, fresh or dried, and a rugged plant for the xeric garden. This flower is drought-resistant and

drought-tolerant and is deer- and rabbit-resistant. It grows over 2 feet tall and blooms mid to late summer, providing blue color later in the year.

These should provide a great blue color if you are working toward a red, white and blue flower bed!

Blues singer Scott Hininger is a University of Wyoming Extension educator based in Sheridan County, serving northeast Wyoming. Contact him at (307) 674-2980 or hininger@uwyo.edu.



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