

Yard and Garden - 02-23-2013 - Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

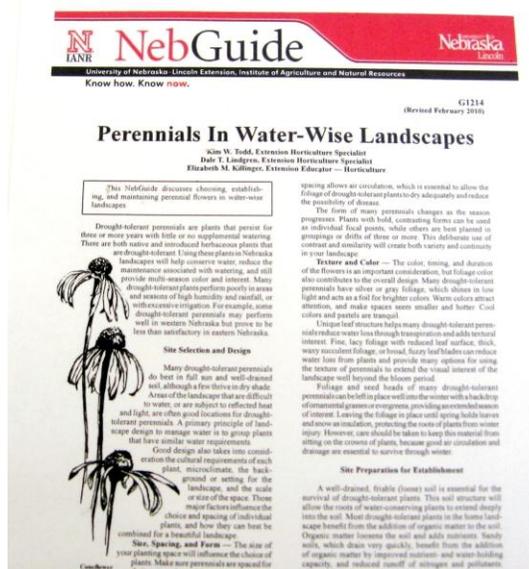
The jury is still out. I'm quite certain we can agree that 2012 was a drought year. Daily, I am asked what kind of weather I predict for this summer. Will the drought continue? For me, answering that question with any degree of accuracy is impossible. I don't have a crystal ball. My response to such an inquiry would be nothing more than speculation and wishful thinking. I, like you, do not want another dry year like 2012.

Since you are reading the Hub now, chances are you may have read the story featured on the front page of the Hub on February 13, 2013. The title of the article was *A Drought Extension or Silver Lining?* The story focused on the predictions of UNL's state climatologist, Al Dutcher. Mr. Dutcher noted that he was seeing changing weather patterns that indicated hope, but he also stated that it depended on the amount of precipitation received during the months of March, April, May and June. The good news—current weather patterns offer hope; the bad news—the drought may continue.

Not to dwell on the negative, but like Mr. Dutcher's advice to farmers, we gardeners should also have a drought plan ready to go. Now is the opportune time to plan this summer's gardening activities. Consider a more environmentally conscious landscape. One way to implement such a plan is to choose plants that have low water requirements—those often referred to as drought-tolerant. Drought-tolerant perennials are plants that survive for three or more years with little or no supplemental watering. Interestingly, many drought-tolerant plants perform poorly in areas with high humidity and plentiful rainfall or in areas with extensive irrigation.

UNL offers Neb Guide G1214, entitled *Perennials in Water-Wise Landscapes*. It can be accessed at <http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=1271>

If you do not have internet service, you are welcome to stop by the extension office and pick up a free copy. The guide lists over 95 drought-tolerant perennials that can be grown successfully in the Kearney area. The guide provides



characteristics for each plant including bloom time, bloom color, height and space requirements, and sun or shade tolerance. The guide also makes reference to site selection and design, site preparation and maintenance instructions.

A good number of the plants listed in this Neb Guide are native to Nebraska. Natives can be defined as indigenous plants, those that originated in a given geographic area without human involvement or those whose origin was not planned by humans. Others listed in the guide are not native plants. The good news is all plants listed possess exceptional adaptability to drought-like conditions.

You certainly can be optimistic and hope for that silver lining — an end to the drought. After all, UNL climatologist Dutcher indicated current weather patterns show promise for a wet spring. Mr. Dutcher also said that prediction is dependent on moisture received during the spring months. Should another drought occur, Mr. Dutcher noted that it would probably be more severe than the one in 2012. Which will it be?

Knowing all this, a prudent gardener should have his or her drought plan ready to go. Remember, the jury is still out on this one.