Today on *Across the Fence* it's flower planting season. But choosing what to plant among the thousands of choices can be a little daunting. So we have the best tips on the best perennials. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us; I'm Judy Simpson. Joining me is our horticultural expert from UVM Extension with flower tips for our northern climate. It's always a pleasure to welcome Leonard Perry, thanks so much for being with us.

Leonard.: Great to be back.

Judy.: Now the weather is warmer people are thinking it's time to get back into the garden. When it comes to flowers where do you start?

Leonard.: Okay Judy there’s just so many basically people ask me what your favorite flowers. Usually it's what's blooming at that time so of course in the springtime it's daffodils there are so many I have quite a collection of those but also trial quite a few plants. I brought a few samples today it's very hard to narrow this down. Next week I’d probably have a different selection so these are just a few different ones that we have. Trials here at my home and zone four a fairly cold site this is just one of the beds as we have there with some coral bells in another bed over ninety different ones of those 60 different cone flowers plus a whole host of other plants.

Judy.: Remind folks what does ‘zone’ mean?

Leonard.: Zone refers to USDA hardiness zones which is the average annual minimum winter temperature that a mouthful there but basically how cold does it get on average in the wintertime. The USDA has come out with a new map you can see here this is for Vermont it's a really great map in the making for several years. It's improved over the previous map because it covers over 30 years of data instead of 15. Most of the country has gotten about 5° warmer on this map. I find it fairly accurate; they've used all new types of methods to create it so it takes into account elevation and affects like the lake that we didn't see before in the maps. The different colors on the map each refers to an average temperature. Again these are just averages that is a good place to start. Another nice thing about this map you just go to the search engine you can type in USDA hardiness map it will come up. You can go to the national map and the nice thing here you can put in your zip code or if you click on the state like Vermont then poof there you go you can zoom in and it's a really fun map and very easy.

Judy.: Once your zone is set than what?
Leonard.: Once you have your zone and again it's only an example because for instance our zone 4 B that now which used to be four A, it's got a little bit warmer to which means it's about 5° warmer. On any property like mine might have two or three hardiness zones. They can just use this as an example of a place to start. Then think about light. Light and soil are two other things to think about. Most people probably think light is the main thing; do you have shade, part shade or sun. I brought a few examples of several varieties for each.

Shade of course is probably one of the most challenging ones since a lot of people have this. Here's an example of a great one the Japanese painted fern. There are several different ones any of these or many different cultivars and cultivars means cultivated variety. But burgundy lace has nice pink effects as you can see a reddish burgundy effect on the stems. They are very silvery affective nice for shade garden it brightens it up. This is one of my favorites in recent years it's a lady fern red stemmed northern lady fern. On the right is the plant in the summer. It's a little hard to see there but it does have reddish stems to it but in the fall of that waiting around it is what I saw on the left bright red stems a light on it just a beautiful plant even in the fall. So moister sites, they will take part shade too. Another great one for the shade with silvery leaves but really brightens it up they are the Brunneras the Siberian bugloss there's several of these; one with even more so over called looking glass but jack frost was a fairly recent one. Little flowers kind of like a forget me not that blends in. It's hard to tell them apart a low plant that blooms in the springtime but it's a really nice one for shade and durable. All of these are very durable. This is one Carex Ice Dance you see a sun in the corner of this picture it really does well and some too that will tolerate shade. It's good for all kinds of conditions. Tips may brown a bit in the wintertime but just keep it well watered and they'll come back. They take dry once established really like moisture conditions. There's several of these bluish foliage this one Ice Dance is nice variegated foliage to it. Their kind of a grassy affect even though it is really a sedge.

This is a perennial plant of the year for next year. Perennial plant association picks the opener each year and this is their choice for next year. That's been around awhile that's one of those underutilized it's not brand new but it has a real nice as you can see variegated edge when the leaves of this one and that the variegated Solomon’s seal with a lungwort down in the foreground. Maybe a couple feet high in the springtime a little bell flower that hang down from the stems are real durable plan very hardy. There's a whole host of some nice ground cover plants in the foam flower group. These have been a lot of breeding there's probably several dozen on the market readily available. This shows an example of foliage on a lot of these lace carpet these bloom in early summer and others have loads of blooms like this one pink bouquet one of my favorite. A lot of these foam flowers are some that either clump or sometimes they run. One thing to keep in mind with these. In fact these are running ones hence the name river because rivers run. The river series this is a brand new line built by a grower right here in Vermont. Sinclair Adams Lehigh and Susquehanna. Flowers and beautiful leaves on those just amazing.

Judy.: Lots of color for shade.

Leonard.: Yes that's what you really want.

Judy.: What about partial shade?

Leonard.: Okay part shade is about where the shade is either indirect, no full sun, indirect light or less than 4 hours direct sunlight. Part shade is 4 to 6 hours of direct sun something like the edge of a woodland maybe a side of a building that just gets morning sun. For those in a lot of these will actually prefer sun or do well in sun but you know will tolerate. I think that's the thing to keep in mind too. They tolerate some part shade but the lady's mantle is a good one. Alchemilla it's how you say that a very
chartreuse flower in summer it blends in with the leaves those that are on the right the water droplets bead up on the leaves when they have the rain. Good for a front border as you can see a low plant about a foot up so far. Again one little sun logo there meaning this one does well in sun as well. Another one this was a perennial plant of the year recently too; blue stars actually a different species but the blue stars makes one of those instant shrubs three or 4 feet high covered in early summer with the star like blue flowers and then of course dies back to the ground in the winter that has a really nice rounded shrub affect. Again great in the sun as well as the part shade just may flower a little less. This is a version of our old fashioned bleeding heart this is called gold heart with gold as you can see leaves. It's beautiful against a traditional pinkish flowers like old fashioned bleeding heart but this one is one of those newer not really new but fairly new and a little more unusual one if you want something different it's great in part shade it brightens that area. The barrenwort epimedium is the genus name just a whole host of these. There's a grower in Massachusetts that developed a lot of these in recent years and brought them in from China. Selected them and there's a whole host of hardy barrenworts or epimediums you can see an example here some really nice foliage and spring that comes up only about a foot high this plant and a lot of these have very nice coloration in fall well. Really pretty flowers and being low you want to it front of a border. They tend to prefer moist but once established they'll take some fairly dry conditions. Like you might have near trees so that epimedium it's a great group as are the perennial geraniums. There are just dozens of these out there now just one of the show some examples of leaf size anywhere from a couple inches to seven or 8 inches across. All kinds of leaf shapes and coloration as you can see there for one in the middle is supposed to look I think it looks like a virus but some people like that variegated affect again so a lot of variation and then the flowers. Just from group I had in late May as you can see there's a whole host that bloom in the summertime too, so quite a range with perennial geraniums and one in particular I like you and unfortunately I can grow it that well because of it’s a zone 5 plant. A little bit warmer sites can grow this and it's called a weaver. It kind of weaves up and the plants behind it whether it be roses or trees or whenever that Anne Thompson is a great perennial geranium for summer just a whole host of those. There’s one with dark colored leaves on it and pink flowers. As another one called espresso. Really nice perennial geraniums to think about again for part shade but they do well in some.

The hellebores in the spring the Lenten rose hence the name this is a new one from England one of my favorites. I’ve seen plants are several years old with maybe 100 to 200 flowers on it their upward facing above the leaves. This is Ivory prince it is a real choice plant again one of the more unusual ones where if you look around you can find that one as I mentioned on trialing a lot of different coral bells or Heucheras. Before I started this this was one of my favorites and it still is because look at the flowers on that. It's not just about the leaves it's all about the nice dwarf mound just a great habit petite pearl fairy. Since I started the trials this is one of my favorites from one of the programs I trialed for. Blooms of Blessingham this is called silver lode very silvery leaves very good flower stems very upright woodpecker good cut flower just more vigorous and many of the other coral bells. More recently the last year to this is been one of my favorites its rated really well. Not showing that the flowers but great ruffled leaves just a vigorous plant and holds up. This is not one of my favorites just for the show the variation and the fact that a lot of these have lighter colored foliage like this one lime Ricky may not be quite as hardy or as vigorous so you have to watch out for that if you have a tough site. Some have reddish underneath the leaves like it amber waves. And probably the most popular now is caramel. Villosa is a species that means it's the type of hairiness, very soft leaves soft and fuzzy but a great color too as you can see some caramel is a really good plant. We saw earlier the film flowers if you cross that which is tiarella with these coral bells Heuchera you get heucherella which is a buy generic cross which is fairly unusual. There are several ones such a stoplight which is very popular. If you want the same affect and again mainly foliage for these heucherella you can see stoplight is a really nice one. Plume poppy this one that's been around is not on everyone's list because this one can spread. I've had it between where I mow and a beautiful brick wall of the house and you can see a really match as well there. If you have a site that's a little protected not in the wind and this can be a great plant. There are good sites for most any
planted and this one does well in the sun too for a taller plant about five or 6 feet high. This one gets about 5 feet high too it does not spread like the regular comfrey this is the Russian comfrey. A less common plant a little more unusual. This is just a great plant. It does mean a little staking but just the real very variegated foliage good for part shade a real showstopper one that you notice. Then finally the culverts root one a lot of people don’t know. They’ve been around for a while but a few cultivars such as this lavender towers. Does well in full sun as in my trials here. Middle of the summer it is covered with these and other pollinators. They love this plant very upright stands up well even in the wind.

Judy.: We notice that a lot of these perennials have the sun logo so I’m assuming that most perennials do like a lot of sun?

Leonard.: Right; a lot of those of course do well in sun and they will tolerate shade but of course most perennials if in doubt will probably it’s going to do well and some except for some like the Hostas we didn’t even cover that’s a huge group of most liking sun. So I just brought a few other examples of sun most of the day sunshine over 6 hours a day. Take a look at just a few of my favorites. Tutti-fruity series I love that name of these yarrows yarrows old fashioned use to bloom early in the season but now this series blooms right through the summer all summer which is very unusual for perennials. You see a whole host of colors. Baptisa false indigo another group you see three types here some in Chicago some from North Carolina a whole host again and one of those instant shrubs about 3 to 4 feet high and light early summer bloom. Coneflowers purples kind of a misnomer you see every color including purple in there. This is at Chicago Botanic Gardens their breeding program. Quite a few have come out as I mentioned earlier I am trial a lot of these to see how they do in our area that you can see the different flower types and colors. Everything but purple. Of course another perennial geranium plants of the year, Roseanne, just a great plant blooms a lot of the summer again a really good choice to try there and then this is a new one Geum a little less common, and a pretty new plant tim's tangerine just a great one of these and then Phlox many types of tall garden phlox here just as an example peppermint twist you can see some variety there creating into the flowers and then finely ornamental grass. I'm starting up as part trial this year we're looking at switch grasses. A blue upright one and one reddish and the leaves. Stay tuned for those up on our web site which of course is perrysperennial.info you can look at the home gardener section for a more complete list. As well as in the research section more on all these different plants and how they're doing.

Judy.: Leonard always an education.

Leonard.: Thank you.

Judy.: Thanks for joining us today. And thank you for joining us; I'm Judy Simpson, we’ll see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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