

This is the time of year when I get kind of cranky and want to rip everything out, throw some compost on the garden and be done with it.

Like other gardeners that also experienced the drought, I'm reevaluating my plant choices and I have vowed to eliminate those plants that need too much babying. Dragging garden hoses around the yard gets old fast.

Though the rains we've gotten in the last few weeks have refreshed the garden and my spirit, it's still easy to see which plants handled the drought well and which ones didn't. It's just too little too late for some.

For example, when I bought a nice, healthy ligularia (a.k.a. leopard plant or ragwort) a few years ago, I knew it was a water hog. But those burgundy leaves were more than I could resist. Bad move.

I planted the ligularia in a spot in the garden that stays wetter longer than most other areas. But, when you go for weeks and weeks without rain, that doesn't really matter. So, the ligularia pouted and sulked until I quenched its thirst.

That scenario played out several times a week this summer. So, anyone want a ligularia? It's free. First come, first served.

What have done well are the plants that are native or that have native parentage. And when I say native, I mean native to our area of Ohio. The great thing about plants like this is that over time they have adapted to the climatic conditions here, including years of too much rain (I know...hard to imagine) and years of not enough. It's survival of the fittest in the plant world.

One of the most outstanding perennial natives for us is the Black-Eyed Susan, specifically

rudbeckia triloba. The plants are hardy and they self-seed, so if you really like this plant, you should have no problem growing it. What can be a problem is the self-seeding thing, but seedlings are easily recognizable and just as simple to remove.

The hybrid and native tickseed (coreopsis) plants didn't bat an eye at the drought either. There's a field just south of us that has many native tickseed plants growing in it every year.

In my own garden, I have some of those, but the hybrids ('Moonbeam', 'Redshift', 'Full Moon', 'Cosmic Eye', 'Route 66', 'Snowberry' and others) seemed to thrive, too.

I particularly loved how well the pussytoes (antennaria) did. Ohio has a native one with white blooms, but mine is a hybrid with pink ones. This is a groundcover that forms a dense mat with small silvery foliage that looks great all spring, summer, and fall, and blooms in late spring/early summer. More, please.

Some other native perennials and their relatives that did well are coneflowers (echinacea), bellflowers (campanula), geraniums, and bee balm (monarda). Every one of my hybrid day lilies (related to the ditch lilies) did just fine, and this fall, the asters are putting on quite a show.

So, I think I'll just grow more of what works and less of those needy plants that demand more attention than I can afford to give them. That will mean a better looking garden, less stress, and more time to enjoy the garden instead of trying to rescue it.

Read more at Kylee's blog, Our Little Acre, at www.ourlittleacre.com and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OurLittleAcre. Contact her at PauldingProgressGardener@gmail.com.