

Best Garden Plants and Trees for Allergy Sufferers

The American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (AAAAI) recommends that gardeners take short – and long-term precautions to control allergy symptoms. This includes choosing the least allergenic plants and trees for your yard.

Seasonal allergic rhinitis or "hay fever" affects more than 35 million people in the United States. These seasonal allergies are caused by substances called allergens, airborne pollens and mold spores that commonly trigger symptoms during the spring, summer and fall. During these times, seasonal allergic rhinitis sufferers experience symptoms such as sneezing, congestion, a runny nose, and itchiness in the nose, roof of the mouth, throat, eyes and ears.

Best Bets for Your Garden

The best bet for your garden, are "natural" plants, according to Mary Jelks, MD, FAAAAI.

"The trend in smart gardening now is to avoid large areas of turf and use natural plants," Jelks said. "Lawns require a good deal of attention, and mowing is a hazard to grass and mold sensitive people."

Native plants are advantageous for people with allergies because they require little effort, withstand the climate extremes in various regions of the country and do not need fertilizers, water or pesticides.

"Different plants produce different levels of pollen, therefore producing different levels of allergic reactions," Jelks said. "For instance, plants that cause allergies usually have flowers that are small and insignificant looking and have no color or attracting nectar. They are usually wind pollinated and produce great amounts of pollen that is buoyant and without much surface ornamentation. Conversely, plants with bright, showy flowers are better for people who have allergies. Their pollen is large and because they are pollinated by insects, the pollen is seldom airborne."

Recommended Plants

The following trees, shrubs, plants and grasses have been found to be better for people with allergies:

Apple, Clematis, Dusty Miller, Iris, Petunia, Sunflower, Alyssum, Columbine, Geranium, Lilac, Phlox, Tulip, Azalea, Crocus, Hibiscus, Lily, Plum, Verbena, Begonia, Daffodil, Hosta, Magnolia, Roses, Viburnum, Cacti, Dahlia, Hyacinth, Narcissus, Salvia, Zinnia, Cherry, Daisy, Hydrangea, Pansy, Snapdragon, Dogwood, Impatiens, Pear, and St. Augustine.

Plants to Avoid

Allergy sufferers should avoid these trees:

Alder, Cottonwood, Mulberry, Poplar, Ash, Cypress, Oak, Sycamore, Aspen, Elm, Olive, Walnut, Johnson, Beech Birch, Hickory, Palm, Willow, Box Elder, Juniper, and Pecan.

Avoid these weeds and grasses:

Bermuda, Perennial Rye, Fescue, Redtop, June, Sweet Vernal, Orchard, Timothy, and Saltgrass.

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology