



L to r: Ajuga 'Pink Lightning' (*Ajuga reptans*); Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*); Heartleaf skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata*); Powis castle artemisia (*Artemisia arborescens x absinthium*); and Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)

HERBS ARE TOUGH PLANTS!

By MARYANN READAL
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Many herbs growing in our USDA Zone 9A gardens survived this winter's three-day hard freeze unprotected. The freeze also did not affect the budding new growth of perennial herbs like anise hyssop, bee balm, salvia, and chrysanthemum, which were already beginning to come back at their roots before the freeze. Onion chives and garlic chives were droopy after the freeze but quickly recovered, sending up new, bright green shoots.

Here are some freeze-resistant herbs to consider planting in your garden this year:

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- **Ajuga (*Ajuga reptans*)** Great perennial ground cover for part sun or shade. Some varieties have variegated leaves and all have pink or bright blue flowers in early spring. Deer resistant. Roots are used in Ayurvedic medicine.
- **Flowering quince (*Chaenomeles lagenaria*)** Blooms in January-February. Medicinal plant with edible fruit used to make preserves.
- **Heartleaf skullcap (*Scutellaria ovata*)** Native Americans dried leaves and stems of this native herb to treat anxiety, stress, and insomnia. It is an evergreen plant that thrives in shade or part shade and also produces a blue flower spike in summer.
- **Powis castle artemisia (*Artemisia arborescens x absinthium*)** Also called wormwood is used to make absinthe. The feathery white foliage is an eye-catching plant in the garden all year long. Other artemisias survived the winter as well.
- **Soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*)** A low-growing perennial with rosy pink flowers in the summer. Its leaves have been used to make a gentle soap.

Among the other herbs that sailed through our recent freezing temperatures and remained green were bay laurel, calendula, catmint, culinary sage, dandelion, dianthus, dill, elderberry, fennel, goldenrod, lambs quarters, lavender, lyre leaf sage, mealy blue sage, mints, mullein, parsley, penstemon, plantain, oregano, rosemary, salvia greggii, thyme, violets, winter savory, and yarrow which is the International Herb Association's 2024 Herb of the Year.



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All of these tough survivors make a convincing case for planting not only for culinary and landscape purposes but also for the beauty and life they give your garden in the winter and for the food and shelter they provide for pollinators all year long.

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