



## Cool plants for rock gardens™

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### All About Rock Gardens

#### Scree and Gravel Gardens

Gravel gardening is even easier than traditional rock gardening, especially at the construction stage. In a gravel garden you just amend the existing garden soil to improve drainage, working in additional peat moss and gravel or coarse sand to a depth of about 6 inches. **Scree** is another term you may run into, and it's essentially the same thing. In nature, a scree occurs in mountainous regions when eroded rocks gather below slopes or glaciers, forming extensive natural gravel gardens.

#### It's this easy:

Here are some easy soil-amending techniques to create a gravel garden:

With clay to average loam soils: spread a 3-inch layer of sphagnum peat moss and till or dig it in, then spread a 2-inch layer of ¼-inch gravel or coarse builders sand, and work this in. Finally, plant your Rock Stars™ then apply a 1 to 2-inch layer of ¼ to ½-inch gravel as a mulch in between the plants.

With light, sandy soils: just add a 3-inch layer of sphagnum peat moss, till this in then plant your plants and mulch with gravel as above.

#### Choosing Gravel

We recommend using local gravel when building a scree garden. Local stone will look more in place than more expensive imported stone. It's a matter of personal taste, but gravel gardens built with white marble stone or red lava rock are not going to look natural in most settings.



Gravel Garden

Screened ¼ to ½ inch gravel is a better choice than the unscreened type often used during sidewalk construction or on driveways. The many fine particles in unscreened gravel impede fast drainage and offer a really good environment for weed seeds to germinate. Whether your local gravel is a



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mixture of different kinds of stones or is crushed from one type of solid rock is not of much importance so far as the plants are concerned.

### Using Larger Rocks in Gravel Gardens

Boulders of different sizes can certainly be included in a gravel garden. Try to bury at least some the boulders by half or more to help them look more natural, as if a glacier had left them in place rather than a wheel barrow. Boulders will also look more natural if they are the same type of stone as the gravel mulch, or at least in a similar tone. Again, this is a matter of taste – if you prefer to use boulders in a completely contrasting colour then go right ahead and do it. It's easiest to do your initial soil preparation work first before introducing your boulders, then rake the area smooth before laying down the gravel mulch.

### Making Pathways

In a medium to large gravel garden, you probably want to include some pathways in order to do maintenance but also to direct people to walk on the paths instead of on your Rock Stars®. Lay the paths after your basic soil preparation is done, but before you start laying down the gravel mulch or planting. Pathway materials are limited only by your imagination and budget. Flat natural



*Gravel Garden*

stones, cut flagstones, bricks and many moulded concrete blocks are widely available at building supply stores. A really inexpensive option to consider (or a temporary one until you lay a “real” path later) is simply to mark both sides of your path and just avoid planting within that area. Once your plants begin to grow the pathway will become more apparent and you can then remove the markers.

### Choosing Plants for a Gravel Garden

All of our Rock Stars® will grow well in a scree or gravel garden. You might also want to include dwarf conifers to provide some more substantial shapes and some interest in the winter months. We have a whole other



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line of low-growing plants called Jeepers Creepers™ that are also excellent candidates for a gravel garden.

Our various Plant Searches are a good place to start when it comes to choosing the right Rock Stars® for your gravel garden. You'll quickly find some types that are appropriate to your region and appeal to your tastes. Also look through the perennial department at your local nurseries and garden centers. They may well stock other kinds of perennials and low-growing plants appropriate to gravel gardens that we don't yet even know about.

### Arranging your Plants

Laying out the plants in a large scree garden might seem intimidating, so we suggest you start in one small area, perhaps adjacent to the pathway or to a grouping of boulders.

Arrange your plants by setting out the pots and moving them around.

Bear in mind our plant spread ranges while doing this, since mature width varies quite a bit from one variety to the next. Think of varying the shapes of your plants, and consider flower colour, blooming time and foliage colour and texture.

Once you are satisfied with your plant arrangement, go ahead and plant your Rock Stars®. Our How to Use and Grow Rock Stars® page gives detailed instructions on planting and also about laying down a gravel mulch after planting.



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