

ANNUALS

Annuals are plants that grow from seed, flower, set seed and die in one growing season. Because they are short lived, annuals must have optimum growing conditions for healthy foliage and good flowers.

WHY USE ANNUALS?

1. Annuals provide color as they bloom.
2. The color theme and variety of annuals can be changed each year.
3. Annuals can be used as a "quick cover" in newly planted landscapes. Choose plants that spread out and cover the bare soil.
4. Annuals provide color in hanging baskets, containers, window boxes and movable pots.
5. Annuals can be combined with shrubs, bulbs and perennials to add extra color.
6. Many annuals make suitable cut flowers for indoor use.

USING ANNUALS IN BORDERS

Create borders no more than four feet wide so you can reach in and tend plants from the edge. Borders will be more interesting if you choose annuals in different heights, foliage and shape as well as color.

Where a large mass of color is needed, it is most effective to use one variety of a flower in one shape or color. Choose long-blooming annuals or use one variety of annual in mixed colors. For economy, choose flowers that can be grown by direct seeding such as nasturtiums, sweet alyssum, marigolds, clarkia, zinnia, cosmos, dwarf sweet peas and sunflowers. Follow seed packet labels for planting times.

ANNUALS IN CONTAINERS

Annuals are ideal flowers for containers. For a fuller effect, use more plants and space them 4 to 6 inches apart (much closer than you would plant in the ground). Use the largest container suitable. Annuals need room to develop a good root system and better water holding capacity. This will result in more flowers and longer plant life. Choose containers with drainage holes or ones where holes can be drilled in the bottom.

Plant in a lightweight soil-less mix or a mix of a soil-less medium and sterile soil. Water should drain quickly to prevent root rots. Keep the soil in containers moist but not wet. During hot, windy weather, it may be necessary to water smaller containers and hanging baskets as often as twice a day.

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Water until it is draining from the holes in the containers. This watering method is the most effective for good plant growth, but does leach the fertilizers from the soil. Apply a liquid fertilizer every two weeks, or a slow release fertilizer according to label directions.

ANNUALS IN CUTTING GARDENS

Annuals provide many long lasting cut flowers. A separate bed or a bed along the edge of a vegetable garden will allow you to cut as many flowers as you wish. Some suggestions for a cutting garden:

Asters	Gloriosa daisy	Snapdragons
Calendulas	Gomphrena (fresh or dried)	Statice (fresh or dried)
Candytuft (rocket)	Marigolds	Stocks
Clarkia	Nasturtiums	Strawflowers (dried) Cosmos
	Pansies	Sweetpeas
Dahlia	Petunias	Verbena
Gaillardia (annual)	Scabiosa (annual)	Zinnias

ANNUAL FLOWER CULTURE

Soil and Fertilizer

Plan an annual bed where the soil can be prepared 8 to 10 inches deep. Add enough organic matter to ensure the soil will be loose, hold moisture and drain well. Good amendments are compost, peat moss, bagged steer manure (sterilized) or bagged potting mixes. Mix in a fertilizer recommended for flowers a week or two before sowing seed or setting out transplants. Use the pre-plant recommendation on the label of the fertilizer package and water well. Later, if plants do not appear to be growing well or have been trimmed back after a heavy flush of flowering, additional fertilizer may be needed. It is important to understand the numbers on the fertilizer containers. NPK stands for nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. So, if a fertilizer states it is 10-10-10 there are equal percentages of each. For lush blooms and buds, look for the phosphorous number to be the highest, for example 16-30-16. A higher number in nitrogen will result in green foliage but fewer blossoms.

Watering and Weeding

Apply enough water to wet the root area thoroughly. Letting annuals dry to the point of wilting will hinder their growth and may stop them from flowering. However, over-watering will encourage stem and root rot. Remove weeds as soon as possible.

Mulching

Mulch with 2 to 3 inches of organic mulch (bark, shredded leaves) to help prevent moisture loss and to keep weeds down. Mulch around new seedlings when they are about six inches tall and the soil has warmed up. After annuals have been removed in the fall, spade the mulch into the soil. This will help improve the soil and discourage insects from over-wintering in the mulch. Add new mulch annually.

Summer Care of Annuals

Many annuals benefit from *deadheading* (removing faded flowers before they go to seed). This keeps plants blooming longer and prevents diseases that favor old blossoms. Pinch or cut off the old flower heads of marigolds, geraniums, fuchsias, dahlias, petunias and zinnias. Shear back petunias, pansies, sweet alyssum, lobelia and snapdragons after the first flush of bloom. Add a light application of liquid fertilizer at half-strength to keep plants compact and blooming.