



ANNUALS

An annual plant is a plant that completes its life cycle, from germination to the production of seed, within one year, and then dies. Because they are short lived, annuals must have optimum growing conditions for healthy foliage and good flowers.

WHY USE ANNUALS IN YOUR LANDSCAPE?

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.
7. There are many annuals that benefit pollinators.
8. Many annuals will "self-seed".
9. Annual plants are not as expensive as perennials.

ANNUALS IN CONTAINERS

Annuals are ideal flowers for containers. For a fuller effect, use more plants and space them 4 to 6 inches apart. Use the largest container suitable, as 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 annuals in a lightweight soil-less mix, or a combination of a soil-less medium and sterile soil. Water should drain quickly to prevent root rot. 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. Apply slow-release fertilizers as per label directions. They are less likely to burn plants from over application.

One common technique for designing containers is the "thriller", "filler" and "spiller" concept. Thrillers add height and create drama and vertical elements in your composition. Filler plants are chosen to incorporate texture and color into the arrangement while

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complementing, but not overshadowing, the main plant. Spiller plants anchor the pot and spill over the edge for a softening effect.

ANNUALS THAT ATTRACT POLLINATORS

Annuals provide food for pollinators. Blooming non-stop from spring to fall, annuals are a reliable and consistent source of food for your insect neighbors. Planting a diverse selection of bee-friendly plants and flowers that bloom all season can help to support pollinator populations.

Alyssum	Cleome	Lantana	Petunia	Sunflower
Annual Daisy	Cornflower	Marigold	Salvia	Zinnia
Borage	Cosmos	Nasturtium	Scabiosa	
Calibrachoa	Heliotrope	Nicotiana	Snapdragon	

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 organic amendments are compost, bagged steer manure (sterilized) or bagged potting mixes.

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. Moisten the bed thoroughly, but do not water so heavily that the soil becomes soggy. Allow the soil to dry moderately before watering again.

A soaker hose is an excellent watering system. It allows water to seep directly into the soil without waste and without splashing leaves and flowers. Drip systems are also excellent.

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 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.