

NORTHERN Gardener

CREATING & CARING FOR YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Annuals

Annual plants provide splashes of color to the landscape. Annuals come in virtually every color and in heights ranging from 2 inches to 6 feet. There are varieties of annuals that will grow and bloom in the hottest sun while others will thrive in the deepest shade. With such a wide variety to work with, it is easy to design beautiful flower beds for your home.

What is an Annual?

Annuals are flowers that are used in the garden or landscape for one growing season. They are typically planted in the spring, bloom for most of the summer and are killed by the first hard frost. Annuals are used in hanging baskets, planter boxes, mixed in the perennial border and shrub plantings and can be planted anywhere you need a splash of color for the season. Commonly grown annuals include marigolds, petunias, impatiens and geraniums, but there are many other varieties to choose from.

Planting and Care

For most annuals, planting should be delayed until danger of frost is past. With few exceptions annuals prefer a warm soil and should not be planted until the danger of frost is past. Pansies, Alyssum and Snapdragons are the primary exceptions and will tolerate light frosts and cool soil. Plant these



first and enjoy the early color.

Good soil preparation is essential to success with annuals. Till or spade the soil deeply and if desired add a slow-release flower garden fertilizer at this time. If drainage is poor, you will need

to consider raising the bed and improving drainage by adding topsoil, compost, peat or other organic matter to the bed. After planting, a mulch will help to control weeds and keep the soil uniformly moist and cool. Planters, pots and hanging baskets must have drainage holes and a potting soil that drains well.

New annual plantings should be watered in thoroughly immediately after planting. A liquid plant starter fertilizer may be used to help get the plants off to a faster start. Once

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- ✓ Many annuals provide food for creatures such as hummingbirds and butterflies. Check with your nursery professional to see which flowers are best.

established waterings can be reduced to once a week or when the soil becomes dry. If possible, water early in the day so that the foliage has a chance to dry before evening thus discouraging plant diseases. Containers or hanging baskets will need to be checked daily for watering. Wind and summer heat will cause rapid drying making it necessary to water daily.

Fertilizing will provide extra nourishment resulting in improved plant performance. There are many types of fertilizers specifically formulated for flower beds to choose from: liquid, granular, immediate release and slow release. If your soils are sandy, be sure to choose a slow release fertilizer.

Always follow label directions when applying fertilizers as the application of too much fertilizer can be damaging to our environment. When adding fertilizer, consider both the short and long term needs of annuals. It is wise to incorporate both an immediate release and a slow release fertilizer at the start of the season when you are adding organic matter to the soil. For granular fertilizers, follow the label directions on the product and spread the fertilizer evenly over the soil surface. Then hand or rototill the organic matter and fertilizers into the soil. Liquid fertilizers will only provide an immediate release fertilizer for your plants.



Many annuals will benefit from being pinched back at planting time. Just pinch out the top 1/2" or so of the growing tip and this will make the plants bush out, producing more flowers through the growing season. Don't be shy, even if you just purchased bedding plants that are in bloom, pinching the tips out will reward you in the long run.

Dead heading, the practice of removing faded flowers and seed heads, is a good practice for all annuals and it is especially beneficial for containers and hanging baskets.

Containers & Hanging Baskets

Containers are an excellent way of providing an accent of color around the patio, pool or other areas. Vines and petunias are some of the most popular container annuals but the possibilities are almost limitless. Plants that hang over or cascade make especially attractive basket items.

When deciding on a basket it is better to use a 10" or larger basket. These will contain more growing medium: the greater amount of soil, the easier it will be to care for the basket by reducing the frequency of watering and fertilizing.

Depending on the size of the container, you may find during the heat of the summer you will need to water daily. Stick your finger in the soil to determine how dry the soil is before you water. You'll also find it beneficial to fertilize often when you are watering frequently. It is easy to add a water soluble fertilizer to your water to replenish the nutrients in the soil. Follow the label directions for best results.

Popular Flowering Annuals For Your Garden

Key to Colors: B-Blue, L-Lavender, P-Pink, O-Orange, R-Red, V-Violet, W-White, Y-Yellow

Variety	Colors	Light	Height	Spacing
Ageratum	B, W	Sun to part shade	6-12"	8-12"
Alyssum	P, V, W	Sun to part shade	2-6"	8-12"
Asters	B, P, R, V, W	Sun	1-3'	12-18"
Begonia, Wax	P, R, W	Sun to shade	9-12"	8-12"
Begonia, Tuberous	O, P, R, W, Y	Part to full shade	12-15"	12"
Bloodflower (Asclepias)	R, Y	Sun	24-36"	9-12"
Browallia	B, W	Part to full shade	10-18"	9-12"
Caladium	P, R, W	Shade	12-18"	12-18"
Calendula	O, Y	Sun to part shade	8-36"	12-18"
Canna	P, O, R, Y	Sun to part shade	3-6'	2-3'
Celosia	P, O, R, Y	Sun	6"-3'	9-15"
Cleome	P, V, W	Sun	3-5'	18"
Coleus	P, O, R, V, Y	Part to full shade	8-24"	9-18"
Cosmos	P, O, W, Y	Sun	1-3'	12-18"
Dahlia	P, O, R, V, W, Y	Sun to part shade	1-6'	12-36"
Dianthus	P, R, V, W	Sun to part shade	6-18"	9-12"
Fuchsia	P, R, W	Shade	10-36"	8-10"
Gazania	O, R, Y	Sun	8-14"	8-12"
Geranium	P, R, V, W	Sun to part shade	1-3'	12-24"
Geranium, Ivy	P, R, V, W	Sun to part shade	6-12"	15-24"
Gerbera	P, O, R, W, Y	Sun	12-24"	12"-18"
Globe Amaranth	A, L, P, R, W	Sun	6-24"	9-12"
Heliotrope	B, W	Sun to part shade	8-18"	12"
Impatiens	P, O, R, V, W	Part to full shade	6-18"	8-15"
Impatiens, New Guinea	P, O, R, V, W	Sun to part shade	12-30"	15-18"
Lantana	L, O, P, R, Y	Sun	12-18"	8-10"
Larkspur	B, P, W	Sun to part shade	24-48"	9-12"
Lobelia	B, P, R, W	Sun to shade	4-10"	6-9"
Melampodium	Y	Sun	8-18"	9"
Marigold, Dwarf	O, R, Y	Sun to part shade	9-15"	12-15"
Marigold, Tall	O, R, Y	Sun	15-40"	15-24"
Moss Rose (Portulaca)	P, O, R, V, W, Y	Sun	4-8"	6-9"
Nicotiana	P, R, V, W, Y	Sun to part shade	1-2'	9-15"
Pansy	B, P, R, V, W, Y	Sun to part shade	6-8"	10"
Petunia, Single	All	Sun to part shade	12-18"	12"
Petunia, Double	B, P, R, V, W, Y	Sun to part shade	10-15"	12"
Salvia	R, V, W	Sun	9-36"	12-21"
Salvia, Blue	B	Sun	2-4'	18"
Snapdragon	P, O, R, W, Y	Sun to part shade	9-36"	9-15"
Torenia	B, P, W	Part to full shade	6-12"	8"
Verbena	P, R, V, W	Sun	8-15"	12"
Vinca (Periwinkle)	P, W	Sun	8-15"	9-12"
Zinnia	P, O, R, W, Y	Sun	10-24"	9-18"



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