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How To Use Annuals In Landscaping Your Garden

By Paul Curran

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An annual, from the point of view of the amateur gardener, is any plant which must be replaced each year and which flowers only once in its life. Annuals generally are grown from seed. The chief advantage of annuals over perennials is their low cost. Thousands of plants can be grown from a single packet of seeds.

Annuals are also very decorative, and provide the best source of flowers for cutting. Their season of bloom is relatively long, as well. Their chief disadvantage is the late date at which they bloom. If annuals are used alone in a bed or border, a good part of the season will pass with little to show in the way of color.

Annuals are also of use as a filler between shrubs set some distance apart. This permits the shrub to grow, yet prevents too stark an appearance. The sowing of annuals, of course, depends upon the class to which they belong. The hardier flowers, such as larkspur, poppies and cornflowers, can be profitably planted in late fall. The ground preparation must be just as careful as for spring planting.

Planting in fall is advantageous since it permits the flowers to get an early start the following spring. Certain other hardy annuals can be planted early in spring as soon as the ground is workable. It is a good idea to start some of the less hardy annuals in seed pots, or in coldframes, as early as March. Otherwise, these plants cannot be set out until all danger of frost is gone. Outdoor planting of annuals in the spring follows thorough soil preparation.

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The seedbed must be carefully pulverized with a rake after it has been prepared and prior to planting. Eliminate all lumps. The seeds are sown broadcast in the patch selected, and then are lightly covered with soil. The soil may be gently tamped after the covering is completed. The patch should be identified with a stake and some sort of sign. Flower seeds are best planted near the surface.

In no case should they be sown more than 1 inch deep. The seeds of larger plants which have a strong growth, such as sunflowers, can be planted in hills spaced from 2 to 4 feet apart. Often, annuals are planted in rows. This method is used when a cutting

garden is being grown. To do this, dig a shallow trench not more than 1 inch deep with a trowel, or your fingers, and then place the seed in the trench.

Sow more seed than appears necessary, and then trim out after the plants appear above ground. Thinning is required, in any event, for a good crop of annuals, if only to insure sufficient room for each plant. Transplanting is a considerable shock in the life of a plant, and unless it is carefully done, the plant will die. It is a good idea to expose coldframes and potted seeds to the outside air for a time before transplanting, in order to prevent shock.

All the soil in the frame or pot should be used when transplanting. Transplanting should be done on a cloudy, damp day, if possible. If the soil is dry, it should be watered before transplanting, and then thoroughly after the plants are in the ground. If the day is sunny, some sort of shade should be provided for the newly transferred plants. As soon as the plants are established, these protective coverings can be removed.

Paul Curran is CEO of Cuzcom Internet Publishing Group and webmaster at Trees-and-Bushes.com, providing access to their nursery supplier of a range of quality plants, trees, bushes, shrubs, seeds and garden products.

Planting Annual Flowers In The Garden

By Ken Snowie

Popular with new and more experienced gardeners alike, annuals are some of the most beautiful, lively, and interesting of all flowers. The massive diversity of annuals, their wide range of colors and

How To Use Annuals In Landscaping Your Garden

styles, and their ease of care make annuals an in-demand choice for gardens everywhere.

Do you know what makes an annual plant truly an annual? For an annual to really be an annual, the plant must finish its entire life phase in one planting season. The seeds germinate, the flowers bloom for the spring and summer months, the plant lays its seed and the plant then dies, all in one planting cycle.

There are some plants that are treated as annuals but are not truly annuals. Some sensitive perennial plants are used as annuals and replanted each year, especially in colder northern regions. While these plants could regenerate in warmer planting zones, in colder zone they can't re-germinate and are planted as annuals instead.

Conversely, some annuals are used as perennials. Some varieties of annuals drop such a large amount of seed in the fall that the seeds are able to germinate and bloom the next year. The plants are not perennials, but their seeds simply germinated and took root, and proceeded to bloom the following year. Some of the more common perennial impersonators include snapdragons and petunias.

There are several ways in which you can start annuals in your garden, either by planting them as seed, buying seedlings (or smaller plants), or buying more established plants. Many annuals can be bought as cell packs, which are a sort of multi-pack. Whenever buy plants to transplant, make sure that you plant them as soon as possible. If you can't plant them immediately, then make sure to keep the plants in a shaded area and water them regularly. Remember to also water the planting area so that you can moisten the soil well before you put your new annuals in the ground.

When using annuals in your garden it is important not to plant them too early in the season. The soil should be warm and the air temperatures should be stable before planting any annuals. To get the annual plant out of its packaging, lift the seedlings gently out of their packs by pushing on the bottom of the container. Try to make sure that the plant and its soil comes out intact.

If the roots of the plant are compressed, loosen them by tenderly breaking up the root ball or cut the sides using a small knife. Doing this will promote deeper rooting and longer plant life after the plants have been put into the ground.

Make sure that you plant your annuals in the ground at the same depth in which they came in the packs. After placing the plants in the ground, gently pack the soil down around the annual and water the area thoroughly. You should then apply a good fertilizer that is phosphorus-rich. Apply the fertilizer at a strength of two tablespoons of fertilizer per gallon of water.

Following these steps will help get your annual garden off to an excellent start. In no time you will have a garden filled with vibrant annual flowers.

To learn more about flower gardening and to pick up a free gardening report visit



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