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The Flower Guide For The Weekend Gardener

By Robert Mosse

Everyone needs some form of flower guide to get the most out of their gardens, especially those

who may not have time to garden every day. Flower gardening is all about stimulating the senses with a display of colors. So what should we plant, and when?

The buzz in gardening seems to be about whether to plant annual or perennial flowers. Some of these flowers give us textures, shapes and heights, while others just go blooming crazy all season long. Here's a basic flower guide for these two kinds of flowers that will help you design a spectacular wash of color for your garden.

Annual Flower Guide:

Annuals do all of their growing in one season. The seeds germinate in the spring, the plants bloom and grow all season, and then they die. You will have to plant them each season, but the result is instant color. Also, if you make an error in your design about color or height, the wrong effect will only last a year.

Annuals produce an endless array of colors and sizes, and most are easy to plant and grow. They can be used for cuttings, in mass plantings, for edging, in rock gardens, in mixed beds, in containers, and in hanging baskets.

Indeed, most annuals are fabulous plants for the weekend gardener because they are so versatile and not too finicky. For all their glorious color, annuals are very inexpensive. You can start them indoors as seedlings, or buy bedding plants from your nursery or garden center. The majority of annuals bloom for most of the growing season.

Here's a list of some great annual flowers that are easy to grow, show off spectacular colors, and are worth every dig of a trowel to plant:

Begonia – Grows 6 to 12 inches tall. Flowers are white, pink, red, rose and scarlet.

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Tricolor Chrysanthemum - Grows 2 to 3 feet. Flowers are white, yellow, gold, red, or maroon, with contrasting color bands on the base of the petals. (This chrysanthemum is different from the perennial chrysanthemum called the "garden mum".)

Dahlia - Grows 1 to 6 feet. Flowers are every color except blue and green.

Geranium - Grows up to 2 feet. Flowers are white, pink, scarlet, orangish-red, red, and salmon.

Impatiens - Grows to 1½ feet. Flowers are white, pink, rose, scarlet, violet, salmon, and orange.

Marigold – Grows 6 inches to 4 feet. Flowers are yellow, gold, orange white, near red, and mahogany.

Zinnia – Grows 6 to 36 inches. Flowers are all colors except blue.

Perennial Flower Guide:

Basically speaking, perennial flowers live more than one growing season, returning year after year. When perennials finish blooming, their foliage provides wonderful background texture, form, and color for your garden.

Perennial flowers may only bloom for a short spell and at certain times of the growing season. This makes it more difficult to plant a garden limited only to perennials and still achieve the desired effect of constant color. For this reason, mixing perennials with annual flowers is the key to a fabulous garden of continual color.

Let's look at some favorite perennial flowers that offer magnificent color and depth to any garden, and will grow just about anywhere:

Butterfly Weed - Grows 1½ to 3 feet. Flowers are bright orange (great for attracting butterflies!) with pretty pods covering the plant once the flowering ends. Blooms all summer.

Chrysanthemum or "Garden Mum" – Grows 1 to 4 feet. Flowers are all colors but blue. Blooms in the fall.

Daylily - Grows 1½ to 3½ feet. Flowers are all colors except blue and white. Blooms from late spring to fall.

Felicia - Grows 1 to 2 feet; Flowers are blue-petalled with yellow centers. Blooms from early summer to fall.

Hosta - Grows up to 3 feet. Flowers are white, lavender or pale violet, often with colorful foliage. Blooms from summer to early fall.

Peony - Grows 2 to 4 feet; Flowers are white, pink, maroon or red. Blooms from late spring to early summer.

Shasta Daisy – Grows 1 to 4 feet. Flowers have white petals usually with a yellow center. Blooms all summer.

With a little experience and planning, you can create a flower garden that blooms from one end to the other, from spring through fall. Bring together a few of these annual and perennial flowers for a wonderful mixed garden.

Learn as you go, make your own improvements... but most of all enjoy whatever time you do have in your garden. Soon you'll be writing your own flower guide inspired by your garden creations!

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Robert Mosse is a garden and lawn care specialist and author of the "Easy" Lawn and Gardening Book Series. Find out more about flower gardens

<http://www.lawn-and-gardening-tips.com/flowers.html>

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and get Robert's free Guide for 101 Gardening Tips.

Why Every Gardener Needs A Garden Shed

By Hallidae Thomason

One of my all-time favorite hobbies is having a garden each year. I think my love for gardening started when I was a little girl spending summers with my grandmother and helping her take care of her large vegetable and flower gardens. I love the feeling of getting dirt in my fingernails and of seeing healthy vegetables and beautiful flowers grow from the tiniest seeds. My grandmother taught me a lot about life and about gardening during those summers. One of the main things I remember her teaching me, however, was that every gardener needed a garden shed.

I thought this advice about a garden shed was a bit strange at first. In fact, I questioned my grandmother about it because I thought surely she had spoken wrong. A garden shed? Sure, they are great, but why would every gardener need one? That was my question to my grandmother.

She answered my question about the need for a garden shed in the most magical and memorable way. She walked me over to her special garden shed and brought me inside with her. Once inside she began explaining all the different tools, seeds and fertilizers that she had in her garden shed. I was quite amazed at everything my gram had in her garden shed. It was really organized and she seemed to have a great reason for each thing she had in there. She said that all gardeners will take more pride in their gardens if they have a special garden shed filled with everything they need to garden.

To make a long story short, I have since become very convinced that my grandmother's words are true about a garden shed. The more I have gotten into gardening the more I have seen the truth that it

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requires a lot of tools and things to make a garden grow with success, and my garden shed is the perfect place to store everything for my garden. Each year it seems like I grow my gardens a bit bigger and so each year my garden shed gets a little more filled with all of the right products and tools for each of my new attempts.

So if you are a gardener or if you are thinking about starting a garden for the first time, then I suggest you invest into a garden shed. It will hold everything you need for your garden and allow you to take pride in the work of your hands.

Hallidae Thomason is a teacher who loves to garden in her spare time. If she isn't in the garden then she can be found in her special garden shed. See

<http://www.aboutgardenshed.info>

for more details.



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