

What is an Annual?

Courtesy of the Minnesota Nursery and Landscape Association

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, and mixed in the border of perennial 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

"Newly planted annuals should be watered in thoroughly. A liquid plant starter fertilizer may be used to help get the plants off to a faster start. Once established, waterings can be reduced to once a week or when the soil becomes dry."

With few exceptions, annuals prefer a warm soil and should not be planted in the spring until the danger of frost is past. Pansies, alyssum and snapdragons are the exceptions and will tolerate light frosts and

cool soil.

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

Water

Newly planted annuals should be watered in thoroughly. A liquid plant starter fertilizer may be used to help get the plants off to a faster start. Once 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.

Fertilizer

Fertilizing will provide extra nourishment resulting in improved plant performance. There are many types of fertilizers to choose from: liquid, granular, immediate release and slow release.

It is wise to incorporate both an immediate release and a slow release fertilizer 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-till or roto-till the organic matter and fertilizers into the soil. Liquid fertilizers will only provide an immediate release for your plants.

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Annuals—

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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.

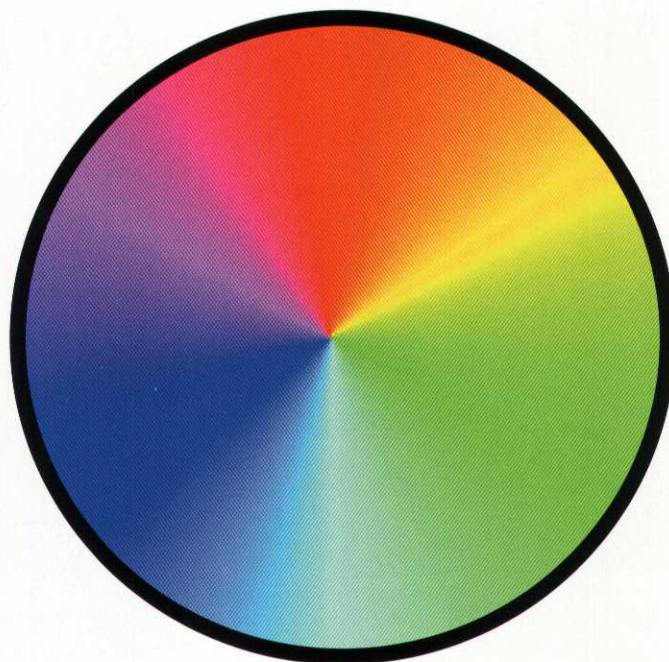
When deciding on a basket, consider one that is 10 inches in diameter or larger. A larger basket holds more soil and reduces frequency of watering and fertilizing.

For hanging baskets, always try to place the basket where the plants light requirements are satisfied. Since hanging baskets are exposed to wind and air on all sides, they are especially prone to drying out. To get the best performance from plants in hanging baskets, check the soil regularly for moisture. With all containers, check the moisture by sticking your finger in the soil before you water. Because they deplete existing nutrients quickly and have no means to obtain more, all plants in containers need to be fertilized with more frequency than annuals planted in the landscape.

Color Wheel

from Annuals Catalog

Primary Colors: Combine primary colors - blue, red and yellow - to create a dramatic contrast.



Complementary Colors: Combine complementary colors, those opposite each other on the color wheel - such as purple and yellow - for a calming, soothing effect.

Adjacent Colors: Combine adjacent colors to create a mixture of hues and tones.

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