

# Same Budget ... Better Flower Gardens

by Dean Bemis  
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Every spring, it's the same old thing ... committees and members want bigger and better gardens. But, for most of us, budgets are not growing fast enough to meet the demand for higher quality gardens. If you have this problem, read on — here are 10 tips for improving the 'look' of your flower beds without greatly increasing their cost.

- Most any bed will look best if it's 'mounded-up' in the middle (higher in the middle), but labor and materials can be expensive, even though the results are dramatic. If you need to use the same cultivar in the entire bed, decrease the plant spacing in the middle of the bed. This will increase the competition between the plants in the middle of the bed and cause them to grow taller — the bed is instantly mounded!



*In contrast with the 1960's type of long leggy impatiens that had all their flowers on the tops of the plants, today's modern hybrids are shorter, with a more compact bushy habit and have their blooms covering the whole plant. This is the new Impulse impatiens — the best of the best!*

- If you have the luxury of selecting several cultivars for the bed you want to look mounded, obviously you want to put the tallest in the middle. Some tall plants are ugly — some are great. Of the great ones, I would recommend Salvia Grenadier (splendens) or a farinacea type, Cleome Queen series or a new tall Celosia Flamingo Feather. They all love the sun, but you can ask your plant supplier for other ideas.

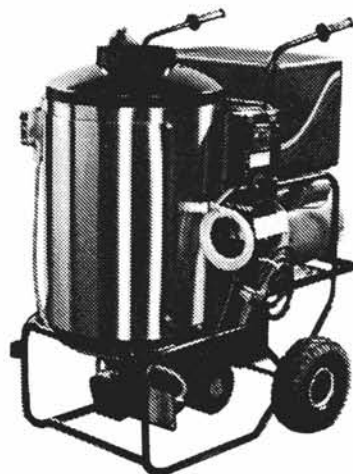
- What picture doesn't look better with a nice frame around it? The same is true with flower gardens ... especially if you are working with mixed flower colors. Always put a solid border around flower beds that have mixed colors in it; it gives the garden 'place' and anchors it to the landscape. Have some fun — select a good color out of the mix and use it as the separate color for the border.

- Start with uniform beds — that is, beds that have no big holes in the ground. Low spots hold water and dry out very slowly. The high ground sheds water and dries out quickly. The differential will give your annuals a very un-uniform 'look'.

- Use light colors on the outside of the bed and the darker colors in the middle of the bed. Why? I don't know, but it sure looks better than when the reverse is done! It also makes the beds look larger.

(continued page 10)

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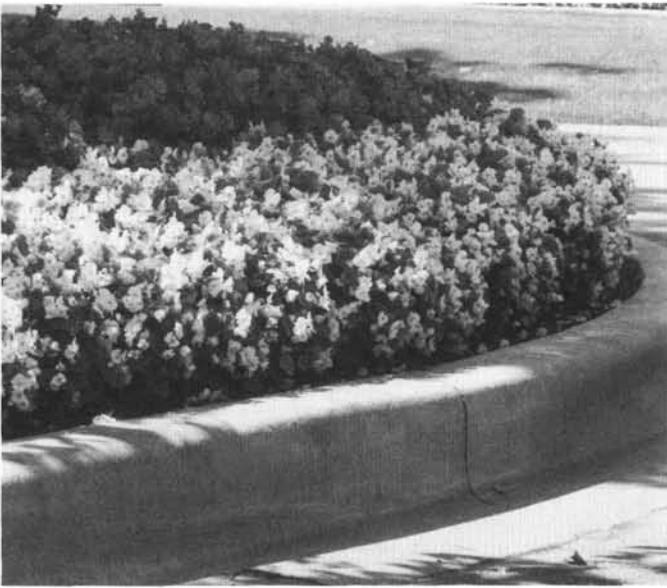
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(Better Flowers continued)



*Party Begonias at Stone Bridge C.C. They look great all season!*

- Try using some 'monochromatic' color schemes. Use several textures and shades of the same basic color in one bed — it makes quite a bright block of color in the greenscape of the golf course.
- Try some high contrast colors especially for beds to be seen from far away, above or from the street. Nothing like 55 mile per hour color!
- Pack in the annuals, dirt is for farms and flowers are for the landscape. Try not to have any soil showing between your annuals by the 4th week in the bed. A full block of color will do wonders for the clubhouse.
- Beware of the dry and wet spots in your gardens. Dry spots can be filled with plants such as portulaca, gerbera, gazanias and best of all vinca ... but you'll have to do some advanced planning with your greenhouse grower to get the good stuff. Ask him!
- Wet spots can be filled with impatiens (shade), Tuberous rooted begonias, mimulus, and other moisture lovers, ask your grower.

If you take care in planning your annual gardens, you can't lose — they're easy to plant and require very little care. Its color that will earn you compliments all through the season! Now, get out there and plant your gardens.

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