

Selecting Annuals for Golf Course Planting

By: Lynn Griffith

In addition to mowing, fertilizing, spraying, irrigation, personnel management and club member relations, a number of golf course superintendents are responsible for general grounds maintenance as well. While the extra responsibility can be a real burden to the turf professional, his non-turf duties can be almost as important. The planting and maintenance of good shrubbery, especially flowering plants, will go a long way toward complementing a well-manicured golf course.

Annual flowers have long been used to add seasonal color. They are used both in peripheral areas, such as around the clubhouse, as well as on the course itself. Favorite spots for planting of annual flower beds include near the practice green, on tee slopes, and near the bridges over water hazards. One of the best places to plant a flower bed is anywhere that grass has difficulty growing. Of course, flower beds cannot interfere with play, but an out-of-bounds area where the turf tends to do poorly may look much better planted in annuals.

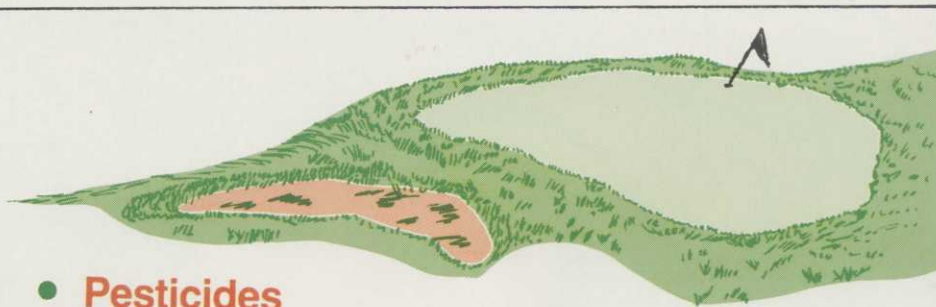
The key to success in annual flower beds on the golf course is the selection of the varieties themselves. However, nothing is going to do well unless the soil in the bed is of proper texture. Since most soils in annual beds are used for several years in succession, it is essential to select a quality soil. If you skimp on soil quality, sooner or later the plant vigor and longevity will suffer.

Most annuals are somewhat prone to over-watering and root rot, so proper aeration and drainage are important. I prefer soil amendments which last for several seasons without breaking down. Such ingredients include sand, perlite, styrofoam beads, and pine bark. Whether you choose a bagged or bulk potting soil for your beds, at least one third of the mix should consist of these ingredients. Wood chips and sawdust don't last much beyond the first season. A good mix for annual beds might consist of something like 50% peat, 20% pine bark, 20% styro beads or perlite, and 10% sand.

The next question is how will the beds be irrigated. Water can be supplied by the regular golf course irrigation system where applicable. In these cases, however, good drainage is a must. If the course is watered at night, then annuals which are subject to leaf spot diseases may have to be avoided. Flower beds which are away from the course itself can have their own irrigation system, or work off of the lawn sprinkler system.

Besides removal of spent flowers, occasional weeding is usually the primary maintenance job. Cypress mulch is generally used to hold down weed growth and to maintain more even moisture levels. Dark peat soils tend to absorb a great deal of heat, and a two-inch thick layer of mulch will help moderate soil temperatures.

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Finally, scheduling of annuals is critical to their performance. Florida is a big state, however, and planting dates vary considerably from the Panhandle to the Everglades. Use the enclosed table to guide you in the right selection for the time of year.

Summer is now upon us, and only some annual varieties can take the summers here. Some of the best summer annuals include Salvia, Marigolds, Lizianthus, Jacob's Coat, Purslane, Dianthus, and Gazania. If you are not sure of the requirements of a particular variety, the best thing to do is ask the grower from the bedding plant wholesaler you buy from.

Growing annual plants in pots is something of a specialty, and most landscape nurseries do not grow them. Ask a landscape nursery you deal with who grows good quality annual in your area. Another method is to ask at one of the large garden centers in your area where they buy their annuals. They should be happy to help you once you explain that you are a golf course employee and a wholesale customer.

One good way to test the suitability of annual species for your course is to plant a "combination" bed of several different varieties. That way you can see which ones perform well, and which ones your members like. Members, and especially potential members, notice attractive flower beds immediately, and they can add a touch of class and a great deal of beauty to a golf course. ■

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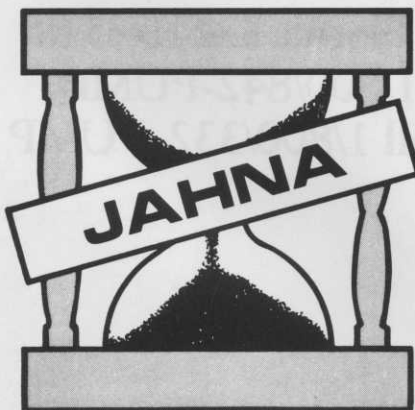


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Table 1. Annual¹ Flower Planting Guide

Name	Exposure ²			Cold Tolerance	North Florida ³		Central Florida		South Florida		Spacing (inches)
	Full Sun	Morning or Afternoon Sun	No Direct Sunlight		Planting Date	Removal Date	Planting Date	Removal Date	Planting Date	Removal Date	
Ageratum	XX			Tender	Mar. 1-15	August	Feb. 15-Mar. 15	July	Feb. 1-Mar. 1	June	10-12
Alyssum	XX			Tender	Mar. 1-15	July	Feb. 15-Mar. 15	July	Oct. 1-15 Feb. 1-Mar. 1	March June	6
Amaranthus	XX			Tender	Mar. 15-30	September	Mar. 15-30	July	July-August Mar. 1-15	First Frost July	14-18
Asters	XX			Tender	Mar. 1-15	July	Feb. 15-28	June	Oct.-Nov. Feb. 1-5	June	12
Baby's Breath	XX	X		Hardy	Feb. 15-Mar. 15	June	Feb.-Mar.	June	Aug.-Dec.	Mar.-Apr.	12
Balsam	XX	X		Tender	Mar. 15-30	August	Mar. 1-30	July	Mar. 1-30	June-July	8-12
Begonia (Nonstop)		XX	X	Tender	Mar. 1-15	June	Feb. 15-28	May	Nov.-Feb. Jan.-Mar.	May May	12-14
Begonia (Tuberous)		X	XX	Tender	Mar. 1-15	June	Feb. 15-28	May	Oct.-Jan.	April	12-14
Begonia (Wax)	XX	X		Tender	Mar. 15-30	Sept.-Oct.	Feb. 15-28	Sept.	Sept.-Nov.	August	12-14



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Browallia	XX	X	Hardy	Mar. 1-15	August	Feb. 15-28	August	Oct.-Feb.	August	12
Calendula	XX		Hardy	Nov.-Dec. Feb.-Mar.	June June	Nov.-Feb.	June	Mar.-Jan.	May	8-10
Carnation (China Doll)	XX		Hardy	Feb. 15-28	June	Feb. 1-28	May	Jan. 15 Oct.-Dec.	April April	8-10
Celosia	XX		Tender	Mar. 15-July	Seed Set	Mar.-July	Seed Set	Feb.-Sept.	Seed Set	14
Coleus	X	XX	Tender	Apr.-Aug.	October	Apr.-Aug.	Oct.-Nov.	Mar.-Sept.	Nov.-Dec.	18-24
Calliopsis	XX	X	Hardy	Mar.-May	First Frost	Mar.-May	First Frost	Feb.-June	First Frost	12
Cosmos	XX		Tender	Mar. 15	August	February	July	Nov.-Feb.	June	12-14
Crossandra		XX	XX	May-July	October	Apr.-May	October	Mar.-Aug.	November	8-12
Dahlia	X	XX	Tender	Mar. 15-30	August	Mar. 1-15	August	Feb.-Mar. Sept.-Nov.	July July	18-20
Dianthus	XX		Hardy	Feb. 15-30	July-Aug.	Feb. 15-28	July	Oct.-Feb.	June	10-12
Digitalis (Foxglove)	XX	X	Hardy	Sept.-Dec.	July	Sept.-Dec.	July	Not Recommended	—	12
Dusty Miller	XX	X	Tender	Feb.-Apr.	September	Feb.-Apr.	August	Oct.-Mar.	August	12
Exacum	XX	XX	Tender	Mar.-July	When Plants Are Overgrown	Mar.-July	When Plants Are Overgrown	Feb.-Oct.	When Plants Are Overgrown	12
Gaillardia	XX	X	Semi-Hardy	Mar.-May	August	Mar.-May	August	Feb.-May	August	12-18
Gazania	XX		Tender	Mar.-May	November	Feb. 15-May	November	Nov.-May	November	8
Geranium	XX	X	Tender	Mar.-Apr.	July	Feb.-Mar.	July	Oct.-Mar.	June	16-30
Hollyhock (Althaea Rosea)	XX	X	Hardy	Mar. 15-June	First Frost	Feb. 15-July	First Frost	Aug.-Sept.	First Frost	12
Impatiens		XX	X	Mar. 15-July	First Frost	Mar. 1-July	First Frost	Sept.-June	First Frost	8-12
Kalanchoe	XX	X	Tender	May-July	First Frost	May-Sept.	First Frost	Sept.-Dec.	First Frost	12
Lobelia	XX	X	Tender	Mar. 15-Apr.	August	Feb. 15-Apr.	August	Sept.-Feb.	July	6-8
Marguerite Daisy	XX		Tender	Feb. 15-Apr.	June-July	Feb.-Apr.	June-July	Oct.-Feb.	June	12-14
Marigold	XX		Tender	Mar. 15-May	3-4 Months After Planting	Mar.-Aug.	3-4 Months After Planting	Feb.-Dec.	3-4 Months After Planting	8-24
Nicotiana	XX	X	Tender	Mar. 15-July	Aug.-Sept.	Mar. 1-July	Aug.-Sept.	Feb.-May Aug.-Sept.	July-Aug. Apr.-May	16-24
Ornamental Pepper	XX		Tender	Mar.-July	October	Mar.-July	October	Mar.-Aug.	November	8-10
Pansy	XX		Hardy	Oct.-Feb.	June	Oct.-Feb.	May	Oct.-Jan.	April	10-14
Penta	XX	X	Tender	Mar.-May	When Disease Affects Leaves	Mar.-May	When Disease Affects Leaves	All Year	When Disease Affects Leaves	12-14
Petunia	XX	X	Hardy	Oct.-Feb.	May-June	Oct.-Feb.	June	Sept.-Feb.	May	12-18
Phlox	XX		Hardy	Mar.-Apr.	August	Mar.-Apr.	August	Feb.-Mar.	July	8-14
Portulaca (Rose Moss)	XX		Tender	Apr.-July	First Frost	Apr.-July	First Frost	Mar.-Aug.	First Frost	10-12
Rudbeckia	XX		Hardy	Mar.-Apr.	August	Mar.-Apr.	August	Feb.-Mar.	July	15-18
Salvia	XX	X	Tender	Mar. 15-Aug.	When Plants Deteriorate	Mar. 1-Aug.	When Plants Deteriorate	Feb. 15-Dec.	When Plants Deteriorate	8-12
Shasta Daisy	XX	X	Hardy	Oct.-Dec.	July	Oct.-Dec.	July	Not Recommended	—	12
Snapdragon	XX	X	Hardy	Oct.-Feb.	June	Oct.-Feb.	May	Nov.-Feb.	Apr.-May	10-15
Statice	XX		Hardy	Feb. 15	June	Dec.-Jan.	June	Sept.-Jan.	May	8-10
Strawflower	XX		Tender	Mar. 15	August	February	July	Nov.-Feb.	June	12-14
Streptocarpus		XX	X	Mar.-Apr.	June	Mar.-Apr.	June	Feb.-Mar.	May	10
Sweet Williams	XX	X	Hardy	Mar.-Apr.	August	Mar.-Apr.	August	Feb.-Mar.	May	10-12
Thunbergia (Alata)	XX	X	Tender	Mar.-May	First Frost	Mar.-May	First Frost	Feb.-Apr.	First Frost	8-10
Torenia	XX	X	Tender	Mar. 15-June	When Leaves Yellow	Mar. 1-June	When Leaves Yellow	Feb.-Oct.	When Leaves Yellow	12-18
Verbena	XX		Hardy	Mar. 1-May	When No Longer Desired	Feb. 15-May	When No Longer Desired	Sept.-Nov.	When No Longer Desired	12
Vinca (Periwinkle)	XX	X	Tender	Mar.-July	When No Longer Desired	Feb. 15-July	When No Longer Desired	All Year	When No Longer Desired	12
Zinnia	XX		Tender	Mar.-June	When Disease Affects Leaves	Mar.-June	When Disease Affects Leaves	Feb.-Mar. Aug.-Sept.	When Disease Affects Leaves	12-15

¹Several plants in this table are perennials but may be grown as annuals.

X - Acceptable Performance

²Exposure

XX - Optimum Performance

³North Florida - Pensacola to Jacksonville and south to Ocala
Central Florida - Leesburg south to Punta Gorda and Fort Pierce
South Florida - Stuart to Fort Myers and south to Homestead