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Flowers for Golf Courses

By Dr. Helen C. Harrison

Planning is the key to successful flower gardens. Before the first flower is purchased or planted you must decide what effect you desire. Do you need a formal bed, an informal one, a circular garden, just a few large plants for a special effect, or a large massive planting? Will your garden be in the sun or shade? What type of mood do you wish to convey? Of course the answers to these questions will help determine the plant material you need.

The first thing to do is observe as many gardens as possible for ideas. Go to parks, residential areas, other golf courses such as SentryWorld, and botanical gardens such as Boerner in Milwaukee. Check for lighting. Notice what happens to various plant materials as shadows fall versus their appearance in full sun.

Next consider the color scheme you desire. Color has a language all its own and is expressed many ways. One of the most common is to divide colors into warm shades

and cool ones. Reds, oranges, and yellows are warm, personal colors whereas greens, blues, and violets are cool, tranquil colors.

What mood do you wish to create? Two warm colors that contrast are probably the most vibrant, exciting display, such as red and yellow. A couple of examples include tulips and narcissus or geraniums and marigolds. Perhaps instead you wish a more peaceful compatible garden. This can be accomplished using shades of cool colors with several plants of the same kind — for example plantings of cineraria or ageratum or alyssum. Finally, a garden with variety in type, texture, color, and size conveys an informal, busy feeling. This is more of an old fashioned garden.

Once you've decided on color, mood, and garden type, then it is time to select plant materials. However, first you must determine whether your planting will be in full sun or partial shade. Most flowers do best in full sun, but there are a few that perform well in partial shade. Next you must decide whether to include just annuals or a combination of annuals, perennials, and bulbs. The latter is the best for Wisconsin to insure continuous bloom for the season.

Most flower selections require properly prepared soil that is well-drained. If possible it is best to add soil amendments such as peat moss or compost. Fertilizer should be added at the rate of about 2 lbs./100 sq. ft. of 5-10-5 or 1 lb. of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet. The time to apply the fertilizer depends on plant type. For annuals apply fertilizer around transplant time. For bulbs apply after flowering. Most perennials should be fertilized several times throughout the season. Perennials also need to be divided every 5-7 years. The time for division is fall for spring flowering plants and spring or fall flowering ones.

Bulbs can present a problem for persons who constantly want a spectacular display since they must be left in the ground until their tops completely die back in order to produce an effective display next year. One suggestion is to plant them in containers either above ground or sunk below ground. Then after bloom, you can remove the container to another location until the tops die back.

Some annuals and perennials that do well in partial shade in Wisconsin include the following. Hosta is a tough perennial grown for its green and white variegated foliage. Although an old plant, there are many new, exciting varieties on the market. Tuberous begonias can be grown as annuals or perennials. The 'Non-Stop' series is a new, excellent quality group that is grown from seed and treated as annual bedding plants. Other perennials include: columbine (tall, many new varieties, very tough); lily of the valley (may be intrusive, good for naturalizing, plant in "out-of-play" areas, at edge of trees); and primrose (small plant, many colors, blooms in spring and fall). Of course, a favorite annual for shade is impatiens which comes in a rainbow of colors. The 'New Guinea' series is a fairly new, excellent quality line that will bloom in sun as well as shade. Two other favorite shade-loving annuals are pansies and coleus. Pansies are available in many flower sizes. One of the new mixes available is 'Universal', a fairly large pansy. Coleus, of course, is grown for its variegated, colorful foliage.

Most other flowers prefer full sun. In Wisconsin, if you want every spring color you will have to plant bulbs. The common ones grown here which easily overwinter in the soil include: crocus, narcissus, hyacinth, and tulip. All these give a spectacular, but relatively short-lived display. All but hyacinth need to be massed for best effect. Narcissus do best in an informal, naturalized setting, and thus should be planted in "out-of-play" areas or in wooded areas. Tulips are probably the hardest to maintain. They look best in formal beds and must be fertilized after bloom and allowed to die back naturally. They like rich soil, amended with compost and usually need to be replaced very 3-4 years.

Other perennials which do well here include peonies (dependable, very long lived, don't like to be moved, colors include rose, light pink, deep red, pure white); daylilies (blooms in hot, dry weather, grows anywhere, easy to care for, 1-7 ft. tall, all colors except pure blue and pure white); iris (fairly short bloom in Wisconsin, easy to grow, best in formal set-

ting, all sizes, and colors); asters (prefer dry soil, all sizes); and mums (must for fall bloom, pinch until flower buds initiated in early July, fertilize 3-4 times during summer, divide every 2-3 years).

Annuals, of course, provide a spectacular flower show in June, July and August. Some of the easiest to grow and most popular are marigolds, zinnias, petunias, dianthus, snapdragons, dusty miller, alyssum, and lobelia. Marigolds come in all shades of yellow and yellow-red. Varieties range from 6 inches to 3-1/2 feet tall. Zinnias come in all colors except blue and green. Height ranges from less than 1 foot to greater than 3 feet and flower size from 1 to 4-1/2 inches. Zinnias are a somewhat formal plant. Petunias come in a wide variety of styles including hanging, upright, multiflora, grandiflora, doubles and singles. Snapdragons are available in a wide color range and offer nice height to a display. They are also mildew resistant. There is a nice series of dianthus out called 'Twinkle'. Dianthus is self seeding and thus can be treated similar to a perennial if you wish. Alyssum and lobelia are excellent for edging and borders.

All of these plant materials are readily available in Wisconsin. The above suggested selections are by no means all that can be grown here. Instead they only scratch the surface of possible choices. Just be careful to know your plant material in order to provide it with the best possible growing conditions.

An Editorial

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