

MAKE THAT FLOWER GARDEN SPECTACULAR!

By Dale A. Gustafson

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Site selection: When the greens committee chairman says, "We need a flower bed by #10 tee", site selection is a factor not often considered. Before a flower bed is prepared, decide what kinds of flowers you want. Most flowers require at least one-half day of sunlight, no serious competition from trees or large shrubs and protection from the summer winds. If the site for the flower bed does not have these features, you will have to accept specific flowers that will thrive in a less-than-ideal location. Shade greatly limits your plant options, and color selection here will be mostly light red, pink or white. In addition to limited color selection, most shade-tolerant plants cannot take much wind. In short, either choose open, sunny, protected areas for your gardens or accept limited selection of plants.

Soil preparation: Poor soil preparation can easily cause a total garden failure. Drainage through the bed is very critical and is an important factor in site selection. Most flowers like light, rich, well-drained soil. If your subsoil does not drain well, then consider using lightly-treated timbers to make a raised garden. Most flowers will do very well with 8" - 12" of good soil, although roses should have approximately 18" of prepared soil. For all types of flowers, a good mixture of 1/3 loam, 1/3 sand and 1/3 peat (preferably sphagnum). As you mix your soil, it is a good idea to incorporate sheep or cattle manure for extra plant nutrition. Preparing the flower bed with a good soil mix is easy if you are filling a raised bed but can be harder on a large ground-level bed. In an area of poor soil a ground-level bed requires a large amount of labor to remove the existing soil prior to installing your garden mix, but it is absolutely necessary for success.

Plant selection: Again, you must select plants that can thrive in the conditions of each garden, but the color selection is equally important. As you consider colors, it is very hard to resist the "that would be nice, too" tendency. Keep your beds simple! Two colors are all you should have in one bed and very often, a single color has the most impact. For variety, one main color can be enlivened by a narrow border of another color. There are some pleasant color schemes other than the standard red and white and you may consider the use of reliable perennials. Whatever your choice may be, try to create a color theme for the entire club and carry it out consistently throughout the grounds. This calls for good planning because of the different conditions in different beds. A bold consistent theme, however, will be a clear example of professional planning.

Regular care: Maintenance of flowers after planting is another success-or-failure factor. Everyone knows you have to water flowers but few people pay enough attention to the fact that each bed or planter will have different requirements. Try to avoid spray from sprinklers on the flowers and be aware that near-by irrigation may have an effect on the amount of water needed. In addition to water, flowers need fertilizing. I recommend fertilizing lightly at least once a week with a product like Rapid Grow. Plants have one function - to produce blossoms - and they'll respond vigorously when you push them with fertilizer. Remember, you can burn them with too much fertilizer so use a small amount more often. To avoid insect and disease problems, a preventative spray program is best. Lacking a regular spray program, early detection and treatment is crucial. Finally, I ask you to remember to remove spent blossoms regularly. If the spent flowers are left on, the plant expends energy in developing seed when that energy could be used to produce more blossoms. To me, this aspect is so important that, for your priority gardens, you may want your gardener to remove spent blossoms every day.

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One final note: Don't risk success by starting with anything less than the best available plants. Make arrangements early with someone who handles quality materials.

Starting with good quality plants and being aware of the four keys to successful flower gardening can make it easy for almost anyone. The flower beds at your club are a reflection of your expertise and a critical embellishment throughout the grounds. Those colorful gardens at your club just may result in that sought after phrase, "The course looks great!"

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE PR

- 1) TO KNOW ME IS TO LOVE ME. This simple maxim lies behind every public relations program, good, bad or ridiculous.
- 2) IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO DO THE RIGHT THING. Simply doing a good job will not get you eternal fame and glory. You have to tell people about it.
- 3) PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED FIRST IN PEOPLE, THEN IN THINGS AND LAST IN IDEAS. That's the secret behind the success of modern television. If you want to promote an idea, first sugar-coat it with a human interest story.
- 4) PEOPLE, LIKE CATS, ARE FASCINATED BY MIRRORS. If people see themselves in your story, they will be more likely to pay attention to it.
- 5) PEOPLE GENERALLY ACT ONLY WHEN THEY EXPECT TO GAIN. Appeals to ideals or altruism sometimes work, but it's better to tell people how they will benefit.

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6) FAINT HEART NE'ER WON FAIR REPUTATION. How will they know if you don't tell them? And, for that matter, what can you lose? The worst that can happen is that no one will listen.

7) THE LANGUAGE OF ACTION IS PLAINLY HEARD. Take positive action to dramatize your point. Actions are much more convincing than words alone.

8) REPETITION IS ESSENTIAL. Your vocal cords may be worn out and you may be tired of your message, but that doesn't mean that everyone has heard it. Keep talking.

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