

FLOWERING ANNUALS AND BEDDING PLANTS

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Annual plants produce flowers during the first season they are grown and either produce seeds and die or are killed by low temperatures in the fall. Consequently, some plants that may be perennials in a warmer climate are grown and treated as annuals in Michigan.

Annuals provide "instant color" to your landscape. By purchasing them as mature plants in flats you can fill in bare spots in your yard. It gives you an opportunity to become an exterior decorator by using various colors and heights to accent your home, apartment or landscape.

Annuals are the easiest plants to grow and also the least expensive. These two advantages make gardening with annuals very popular.

Four points must be considered to grow annuals successfully:

1. Buy fresh, clean seed or flats of transplants that are dark green in foliage color short in height and free of insects and diseases.
2. Prepare soil in flower beds or planters properly.
3. Do not plant until damage of frost is over.
4. Make certain plants are properly spaced, watered when needed and kept free of dead flowers or yellow foliage.

Selecting Annuals

There are many types of annuals with various colors and heights. Review the accompanying list of selected annuals to determine the colors and heights you want for your garden.

Be sure to buy disease-free plants or seed. The best way to obtain the highest quality annuals is to buy seedlings or flowering annuals from your local greenhouse or garden center. Michigan ranks first in bedding plant production so there should be a large selection available from which to choose. However, the other alternative is to sow fresh seed in flats and then transplant the seedlings to the desired area.

Sowing Seed

Seed should be sown in a small area thoroughly prepared with peat and sand so the soil will not cake and prevent entry of water. To avoid this, sow the seed in vermiculite-filled furrows. Make the furrows in the soil about one-half inch deep. After filling the furrows with fine vermiculite, moisten with water.

Then make another shallow furrow in the vermiculite and sow the seed in this furrow. Sow according to direction on packet. Cover the seed with the vermiculite and use a mist nozzle to water the seeded area thoroughly (Caution - small seed such as petunias are sown on soil surface and not covered).

To retard evaporation of water, cover the seeded area with sheets of newspaper about 1 to 2 inches above the soil surface or enclose the container in a plastic bag. Once seedlings appear, remove the paper or plastic but keep thoroughly watered.

Transplant these seedlings and space them out according to the accompanying table.

Preparing the soil

Garden soil must be properly prepared to insure good growth of annuals. In spring just before planting, add a 1 to 2 inch layer of peat moss. If your soil is a heavy clay, use twice the amount of peat moss and 1 to 2 inches of sand. By adding peat and sand to your soil you will eventually improve even poor subsoil to make a good garden soil.

Also, a complete fertilizer should be added at this time -- about 2 pounds of 5-10-5 to every 100 square feet of soil; then turn over the soil and rake to a smooth surface. After raking, the soil will be ready for seeding or planting with seedlings.

Setting plants out

Annuals vary in their light requirements. Some perform best in shade while others perform best in full sunlight. Some annuals do well in either sun or shade. See the table for the amount of light that each plant requires.

Watering Annuals

Do not rely on natural rainfall to take care of all the water needs of your annuals plants. In some years rainfall will be sufficient to produce fine annuals.

ANNUAL FLOWERS - COLORS AND HEIGHTS

Plant	Color	Height Inches	Exposure	Plant Spacing Inches	Remarks
Ageratum	blue or white	6 to 18	Part of full sun	10	Pinch tips of plants to encourage branch; remove dead flowers.
Balsam	reds, pin, purples	20 to 30	Sun	12	Will not tolerate cold wet weather; good in planters or window boxes.
China Aster	blues, white, pinks	12 to 24	Sun or shade	10	Good for cut flowers.
Cockscomb	reds, orange, yellow	16 to 40	Sun or shade	10	Good for cut flowers or dried material.
Coleus	green and white, yell. red, many mixtures	18 to 24	Sun	10	Grown for foliage color; good for planters or window boxes.
Cornflower	blue, pink, red	12 to 36	Partial shade	12	Good for cut flowers.
Cosmos	white, pink, crimson	30 to 48	Sun	12	Good for cut flower, background plant.
Dahlia	wide range of color: red, yellow, purple, orange, white	18 to 40	Sun	14	Good for cut flowers, bedding of background plants.
Four-o'clock	white, red	20 to 24	Sun	12	Good in formal beds.
Gaillardia	red, bronze, yellow	12 to 18	Sun	12	Source of cut flowers and plants for drying.
Globe Amaranth	white, purple, reddish, purple	18 to 24	Sun	12	Source of cut flowers and plants for drying.
Impatiens	white, red, orange, purple	10 to 20	Shade	12	Beautiful for flower beds in shady area, good for cut flowers.
Larkspur	white, blue, purple	18 to 48	Sun	8	Difficult to transplant; buy in peat pots; good cut flowers
Marigold	orange, bronze, yellow	6 to 30	Sun	12	Good for cut flowers; Window boxes.
Morning Glory	blue, pink	8 to 12	Sun	36	Vine type growth.
Nasturtium	orange, gold, salmon	10 to 12	Sun	12	Need well drained soil.
Pansy	red, yellow, blue, bronze, mixtures	6 to 10	Sun or partial Shade	8	EARly spring flower, nice in rock gardens.
Petunia	almost every color red, pink, blue, white, bi-color	8 to 24	Sun	14	Good for window boxes beds, bloom all summer.
Phlox	pink, white, salmon, pastel with white eye	6 to 12	Sun	8	Good in rock garden

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Pink	Pink	6 to 12	Sun	12	Good source of cut flowers
Poppy	Rose-pink Orange	12 to 16	Sun	10	Good source of cut flowers
Portulaca	red, pink, yellow white	6 to 9	Sun	12	Good in rock gardens.
Rudbeckia	yellow, dark center	20 to 24	Sun or partial shade	12	Good source of cut flowers
Scabiosa	mixed colors	18 to 36	Sun	14	Good source of cut flowers
Salvia	red, pink	14 to 36	Sun	12	Used as border plants.
Snapdragon	pink red, yellow, bronze, white	10 to 36	Sun	10	Good for cut flowers.
Spider plant	pink and white	30 to 36	Sun	14	Good background plant.
Stock	white, pink, blue	24 to 30	Sun	10	Good for cut flowers.
Strawflower	yellow, yellow black center, red, brown	30 to 40	Sun	12	Good source of cut flowers and plants for drying.
Summer cyprus	green	30 to 36	Sun	24	Grown for foliage, used a hedge
Sunflower	yellow, dark center	48 to 84	Sun	14	Used for background, sou of cut flowers.
Sweet Alyssum	white or blue	6 to 10	Sun	12	Good border plant.
Verbena	purple, white, blue, red.	9 to 12	Sun	24	Source of cut flowers.
Vinca	white purple	15 to 18	Sun	12	Good plants for window b
Zinnia	red, rose, yellow, orange, pink, purple, cream	18 to 36	Sun	12	Source of cut flowers.

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