

# BEYOND THE GREENS... WHY NOT REDS, YELLOW, AND PURPLES?

Bedding plants add color and beauty around the golf course

by Kathy Zar Pepler

**T**he many varieties of bedding plants available today provide landscape professionals with an artist's palette of rich colors and textures.

"With smart use of these easy-to-care-for plants, the traditional lush green golf course can be transformed into a spectacular canvas of color. All you need to create your own artistic masterpiece is your imagination, a little knowledge, and effective communication with your grower," explains Terry Numfeld, executive director of Professional Plant Growers Association in Lansing, Mich.

Bedding plants are particularly suited to enhancing the beauty of golf courses because of the instant, bright color they provide. "People respond emotionally to a large splash of one or several colors, and unexpected splashes of color strategically positioned throughout a golf course are especially appealing," Numfeld adds.

After incorporating 15 bedding plant species, 380 flats, and 22 beds into the landscape last year, Susan Crosley, staff horticulturist at the Findlay (Ohio) Country Club reports that long-time members often comment on their beauty. Susan's husband Clay, the club superintendent, adds, "For every compliment I got for the golf course, she got at least two. I kidded her that she stole the show."

While the club planted flower beds in the past, it was not until 1990 that the beds looked spectacular. Why? Because it wasn't until fall of 1989 that Sue and Clay began at the club.

The first thing Sue did was assess where the flower beds should be located. Three of the 22 beds were critical: the "circle bed" at the club's entrance, the "transition" bed between the club and tee, and the "logo" bed behind the 18th hole. It was important to Sue that these special beds would create just the right mood.



Annual flower beds used to enhance the beauty of at the Findlay Country Club include more than 2,520 annuals.

## The circular bed

Because the circular drive to the club's entrance was highly visible and formal, Sue wanted to emphasize this theme in the circle beds. She did so by using 25 flats of one variety of a yellow marigold, 15 flats of white alyssums and five flats of red salvia in the 2,000-square-foot beds. "I wanted these beds to bloom continuously all summer long," explains Sue, "and I thought the yellow (the theme color) would be a nice contrast against the dark green yews."

She decided to use white alyssum to further highlight the yellow marigolds. In front of the foundation yews, Sue selected red salvia as yet another distinct and dramatic accent.

The easiest way to create a formal bed is by using annuals, one variety (one color). Somewhat low-growing, well-mounded species tend to appear more formal, such as fibrous begonias,

tuberous begonias, geraniums, impatiens, New Guinea impatiens, French marigolds, petunias and vinca.

When a 2,000-square-foot bed is designed and one variety is used, it's important to allow for enough lead time for the grower to be able to grow the color required. When several colors are used in a bed, whether it be one or several species, it's a good idea to use at least two to three times as much of the darker color than of the lighter color.

Why? Because dark colors recede and light colors appear to pop out, providing a better balance.

When two colors of one species are used together (like hot pink and white impatiens) be sure the two colors are in the same series. A series is like the last name of a line of colors, such as 'Yellow Boy', 'Golden Boy', 'Orange Boy', and 'Harmony Boy' in the "Boy" series of marigolds.

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Breeders develop colors (varieties) within a series to achieve similar traits, like plant growth habit, height, size of bloom and blooming period—for both greenhouse (pack) and outdoor performance. By choosing varieties within the same series, you won't be surprised to find one variety six inches and another 12 inches tall.

### The transition bed

Another important bed, located between the clubhouse and No.1 tee, became known as the "transition bed." This informal 1,850-square foot shaded bed created an effective transition from the formality of the entrance to the natural setting of the course.

According to Clay, "The plants created a friendly, laid-back, relaxing at-

## Early ordering makes it easier to remember what was ordered and how well each variety fared the season before.

mosphere that added to the enjoyment of the game especially for those who are social versus serious players."

Forty flats of mixed colors of begonias and 20 flats of mixed colors of coleus were used. Several reasons this bed appeared informal include:

- coleus looks natural, "woody;"
- mixed colors generally appear informal; and
- the bed was not designed in a rigid straight line, but instead portrayed a meandering effect.

Other ways to achieve an informal appearing bed might be to incorporate annuals among perennials. Or combine a number of species, colors, textures and flower forms together.

Some plants, like coleus, creeping zinnia, cornflower, gazania, rudbeckia, kochia, nicotiana, snapdragons and zinnias just naturally look casual.

To design a sun-loving informal bed, consider using canna lilies, spider flower or hibiscus in the background. Then incorporate a mixture of rudbeckia, African marigolds, nicotiana and/or ageratum in the foreground.

### The 1000 bed

While bedding plants were strategically planted throughout the 170-acre course, the grande finale certainly became the logo bed placed



**Findlay Country Club horticulturist Susan K. Crosley, left, with Shirley Vlasich, FCC's women's club tournament champion, 1989 and 1990.**

near the last green.

To create a final, spectacular visual image that members and guests will long remember, consider transplanting bedding plants to form your golf course or corporate logo. This approximate 10-by-20-foot bed was not only highly visible, but it achieved added interest of a 3-D effect by planting the letters in 25 flats of 18 inches tall red salvia with 10 flats of four-inch-tall white sweet alyssum for the background.

Use a spreading annual outside the lettering, such as ageratum, lobelia, low growing impatiens, cascading petunias or vinca. For a more rigid annual to form the letters, consider transplanting celosia, dahlia, dianthus, geraniums, marigolds, ornamental pepper or primrose. Note that some of these species are short and others tall, that some require cool and others hot weather, and that some prefer sun while others bloom best in

part-shade.

Susan's dreams for a bigger and better 1991 are wholeheartedly supported by the country club's board of directors; her flower bed budget has been increased 50 percent.

### Looking back

While many aspects of designing, transplanting and maintaining the 22 flower beds were thoroughly enjoyable, it was not always easy going for Sue. Here are some practical lessons she learned:

1. Start out small if: a) having flower beds is new to you, no matter how much of a horticulture background you have; b) this is your first year at the job site so you can learn more about the growing conditions, watering systems, etc; c) you just moved from another part of the country; d) you don't have an automatic watering system.

2. Prepare the beds before the plants are to arrive so that when the plants do arrive, they can be planted right away.

3. Don't take more flats than can be transplanted within a short period of time, especially if you don't have an ideal location to hold over the plants.

4. Check the water and soil for pH. Check the soil for possible nutrient deficiencies and porosity.

5. Amend the soil several weeks before transplanting.

6. Avoid growing too many species for the first time. Here too, learn the idiosyncrasies of each species.

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### 20 Low - to - Medium Maintenance Annuals that can be grown almost anywhere in the country.

Species	Spacing	Height	Light	Moisture	Temperature
Ageratum	5-7"	4-6"	S,pSh	a-m	a
Amaranthis	15-18"	18-36"	S	d	h
Begonia, Fibrous	7-9"	6-8"	S,pSh,Sh	a	a
Celosia	6-8"	6-15"	S	d	h
Coleus	8-10"	10-24"	Sh,pSh	a	a-h
Dianthus	7-9"	6-10"	S,pSh	a	any
Dusty Miller	6-8"	8-10"	S,pSh	d	h
Geranium	10-12"	10-15"	S	m	a-h
Gloriosa Daisy	12-24"	18-36"	S	m	h
Hibiscus	24-30"	48-60"	S,Lsh	m	a-h
Impatiens	8-10"	6-18"	pSh,S	m	a
Impatiens New Guinea	10-12"	10-12"	S,Lsh	m	a
Marigold, French	3-6"	5-6"	S	a	a
Ornamental Pepper	5-7"	4-8"	S,pSL	m	a-h
Petunia	10-12"	6-12"	s	d	a
Portulaca	6-8"	4-6"	s	d	h
Salvia	6-8"	12-24"	S,pSh	a-m	a-h
Spider Flower	12-15"	30-48"	S	d	a-h
Sweet Alyssum	10-12"	3-5"	S,psh	a-d	a
Vinca	6-8"	12-24"	S,pS	any	h

**Light:** s = sun  
sh = shade  
pSh = part Shade  
Lsh = light Shade

**Moisture:** a = average  
d = dry  
m = moist

**Temperature:** a = average  
h = above  
85°F  
c = below  
75°F

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7. Before growing a large bed of a species and possibly a variety that has not been grown in the area before, try it out on a small scale in a inconspicuous area.

The Professional Plant Growers Association offers these suggestions:

● Communicate your needs to your growers.

● Tell your grower the dates you want the bedding plants and how they are to be transported.

● If you require specific varieties and/or cells per flat or pot sizes, make this clear when ordering the plants.

● If you are not certain which species or varieties will do best in the location intended, ask your grower for advice. They are very knowledgeable and can provide valued suggestions.

● Order early. Most successful landscapers place their orders between July and early November. One advantage to early ordering is it's easier to remember what was ordered and how well each species/variety fared the season before.

● Whenever shipments arrive, "take stock" immediately. Report any damaged or missing plants immediately. Your grower, like you, wants your order to be right.

● Water the plants right away to reduce transportation stress.

● Locate the plants in a somewhat shaded area away from strong winds until they can be transplanted.

● Keep in mind the standard "formula"—that one person can plant approximately 25 flats per day—to help determine the number of people needed to transplant the bedding plants as soon as possible after delivery.

(To obtain a comprehensive booklet about annual bedding plants and ideas for their use in the landscape, order "The Professional Guide to Flowering Annuals." This 28-page book is available through the Professional Plant Growers Association, P.O. Box 27517, Lansing, MI 48909. It contains useful design ideas, plus charts outlining planting, spacing and herbicide tolerance of most bedding plant annuals.

Include your address and a check for \$2 when ordering.) **LM**

Kathy Zar Pepler is a horticulture public relations consultant and writer for Yoder Brothers, Inc. and the Professional Plant Growers Association. With 21 years experience in the horticulture field, she has managed one of the largest garden centers/florists in the country, was the national spokesperson for the gardening and interior landscape/floral industries and was the executive director for All-America Selections.