

Annuals offer color, low maintenance



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Question: How can I fill in the spaces in my landscape beds and add some color among the evergreen trees and shrubs?

Answer: Annual flowering plants are versatile and will provide a fast growing display of color to fill in spaces within the frame-work of an established garden, enhancing your trees, shrubs and perennials. Annuals can also be grown by themselves in beds, containers or hanging baskets.

Annuals are plants that germinate, flower, set seed and die within one year. Planting annuals can be as simple as selecting one favorite flower and flooding an entire planting area with it. Most people, however, prefer to mix different annual flower varieties in their gardens, even though it requires a bit more work and planning.

Most of us purchase these plants as “bedding plants.” Before purchasing annual flowers, be sure to assess your site conditions, such as full sun verses shade, poor soil verses a rich loam and irrigation requirements. By knowing these factors, you are sure to buy plants that will thrive in your garden.

Look for plants that are different heights, colors and textures. Buy as many different types of flowers as you want, depending on your tastes. Make sure you have some that are tall, medium and short so you can add lots of layers to your annual garden design plan. Imagine a view of your garden as a picture. A pleasing picture has interest at all levels.

When planting annuals in your garden bed, it is important to loosen the soil sufficiently around the planting hole. Incorporate some compost into the planting area. Apply a weak solution of water-soluble fertilizer around each plant. Side dressings of a granular plant food sprinkled around each plant at two-week intervals should carry them through the



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Petunias, perfect for containers, pots, window boxes, hanging baskets and garden beds, are fuss free flowers that come in pinks, reds, whites, yellows and purples.

rest of the summer. Water your plants deeply. Use mulch to retain moisture.

Here are some recommendations for easy-to-grow annual flowers you can add to your landscape this summer:

■ Nasturtium is an edible flower with bold blooms. The nasturtium plant is simple to grow and maintain. This annual thrives in well-drained soil and full sunlight.

■ Zinnias have bright, cheerful flowers and are the perfect annual for novice gardeners. The deer-resistant plant thrives in elevated temperatures and full sunlight with minimal care. Gardeners should note that zinnias must not be overwatered or they’ll develop a powdery mildew.

■ Annual begonias are an excellent choice for beginner gardens. Plant in partial shade to avoid leaf burn and be careful not to overwater. You should check the soil for proper drainage.

■ Cosmos are easy to care for in the garden. These cute and feminine flowers grow taller the more you cut them (and faster, too), meaning you’ll have pretty petals (in shades of



Cosmos, which come in shades of pink, white and purple, grow taller and faster the more you cut them.

pink, white, or purple) in your garden all summer long. The seeds can be sown directly into outdoor soil and require little water in order to multiply.

■ Snapdragons easily add height, dimension and bold color to your garden. Plant in full sun or part shade.

■ Petunias are perfect for containers, pots, window boxes, hanging baskets, and garden beds. You can’t go wrong with these fuss-free flowers. You can find them in pretty pinks, reds, whites, yellows,

and purples.

■ Marigolds are a summer favorite. These vibrant orange and yellow flowers produce a hardy amount of blooms each summer. You can expect around 15+ flowers per plant.

■ Celosia comes in a variety of shapes (brains, fans and plumes) and a range of colors (pink, red, orange, and yellow). They grow fast and are incredibly easy to care for.

■ Stock is slightly spire-like and comes in a wide range of colors. It makes a great cut

flower and perfuming. It grows best in full sun or part shade and moist, well-drained soil.

Deadheading is the gardening term used for the removal of faded or dead flowers from plants to both maintain a plant’s appearance and to improve its overall performance. Deadheading is an important task to keep up with in the garden throughout the growing season. As flowers shed their petals and begin to form seed heads, energy is focused into the development of the seeds.

Regular deadheading channels the energy into the flowers, resulting in healthier plants and continual blooms.

Annual flowers – enjoy them all summer. Select them carefully so their color, texture and height add to whatever you want to emphasize, be it a wide sweep of petunias or a border of marigolds.

Do you have a gardening question? Contact the Douglas County Master Gardeners at ask.extension.org/ask. Presently, the plant clinic is closed until further notice due to public safety orders.