



FALL & WINTER ANNUALS

When selecting annuals or perennials one must decide how they are going to be used. Generally annuals accent a landscape and are not a dominant feature. Colors should blend with each other and any existing landscape. An elaborate or multi-color display can often be very distracting. When planting annuals in beds, choices should be limited to as few varieties as possible. Mass planting has more impact than several varieties mixed together. Also, limit colors to 2 contrasting or 2 complimentary colors. If you decided to plant in containers, more varieties can be used to create a beautiful color accent.

When a decision has been made to plant annuals in the ground, bed preparation should be done prior to purchasing plants. When plants are purchased, plan on getting them planted as quickly as possible. Don't leave them too long. Soil preparation should consist of mixing in organic matter (compost or composted manure) to help annuals to perform well and grow quickly. Soil amendments should be added to the native soil to a depth of 18 inches ideally. Fertilizing new annuals is equally important. A controlled release fertilizer can be added to the soil as well as applied to the soil surface when planting. Don't overdo fertilizer that is high in nitrogen as plants will grow quickly but not bloom well.

Once you are ready to plant, leave plants in their containers while you are arranging your bed plan, starting from the back of the bed. Once your plan is set, remove the plastic containers and plant your plants, watering in well once you have finished. Mulch will also aid in good weed control and maintain moisture, however, never spread mulch too close to each plant, to avoid root rot.

Containers are also a great way to infuse annual color into your landscape. Often people have neither the space nor the interest in planting annuals in the ground. A great alternative is planting annuals in containers to provide showy color at your home. Good quality potting soils should be used when planting containers and slow release fertilizers will keep your plants healthy and blooming. Mixing varieties for differences in color, height and texture is ideal in container planting.

Finally, maintaining annuals requires regular watering, fertilizing (if using water soluble) and deadheading- removing spent blooms.

Making good decisions on what varieties to purchase is essential in Florida. Generally, in our zone (9), we have two seasons for annuals. Winter or cool season annuals grow well and flower in cooler days and nights. Warm season or summer annuals must tolerate heat, humidity and at times heavy rain. For our purposes, we are concentrating on annuals for winter planting.

The following is a list of annuals that perform well in our zone through the cool season- generally mid-October to late April. Attention should be given to the recommended light conditions as some plants prefer shade.

- Alyssum
- Wax Begonia
- Calendula
- Flowering Kale
- Dianthus
- Dusty Miller
- Lobelia
- Pansy
- Viola
- Petunia
- Snapdragons