

# HOME HORTICULTURE

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## What Are Annuals and Perennials?

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Annuals complete their life cycle in one growing season. Seed germinates in the spring, the plant grows, flowers, produces seed and then dies.

Perennials live for more than one growing season. There are two types of perennials. Herbaceous perennials generally die to the ground at the end of the growing season but send up new shoots the following spring. Woody perennials, such as trees and shrubs, do not die back to the ground but get larger each year.

## Using Annuals

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Annuals are useful for several reasons. With a little attention they grow well for most gardeners and provide almost instant color. Many are purchased in bud or bloom to begin flowering soon after planting. They continue to bloom until frosted in the fall. If this year's selections are not the best choices, they only need to be tolerated for one year. Next year change the color scheme or plant arrangement to a more satisfactory design. Well-designed and selected plantings can be changed due to the large variety of annual types and colors.

The most impressive use of annuals is in large groups of one color. To mix colors, plant in small groups of one color. The least effective use is mixing the individual plants and colors.

Annuals give color to spring flowering bulb beds after the bulbs have finished blooming. Such beds are often unattractive while the bulb foliage is maturing and the annuals are too small to hide it. Most bulbs are planted deep enough so annuals may be planted over them. Where bulbs are shallow, plant spreading annuals around the grouping of bulbs. The bulbs will be covered eventually even though no annuals are actually planted over them.

Annuals are excellent in a garden for cut flowers. If the garden provides many cut flowers, few blossoms may remain in the garden. Include spike flowers as well as round individual flowers. Consider color compatibility between the flowers and the decor of rooms where the arrangements are to be displayed.

## Flower Bed Preparation

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New flowerbeds should be prepared the autumn before the first planting of annuals. Poorly drained soils must be improved by adding organic matter to the soil. Peat moss, compost or well-rotted manure are common sources of organic matter. Spade the soil to a depth of eight to ten inches, turning it over completely. Respade three to four times at weekly intervals. Work the fertilizer in prior to spring planting. Peat moss and other soil amendments may also be worked in at this time. For ordinary soil, work in one to two inches of peat moss. In sand or heavy clay, work in two to four inches of peat moss. Use one and a half pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet. Rake the soil smooth and the bed is ready for planting. Soil test results may suggest some fertilizer other than 5-10-5.

## Planting Annuals

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Do not plant in the garden until the danger of frost is past, or the soil temperature is 60 degrees. Indoor planting times are 6 to 8 weeks earlier than anticipated outdoor planting dates. Buy short, stocky, dark green plants not yet in full bloom. Large plants in full bloom do not transplant as well as the smaller plants. During hot weather plant in the evening when it is cooler.

Most purchased plants are grown in containers with individual compartments for each plant. Remove plants by gently pushing on the sides and bottom of the compartment. Try to plant as soon as possible after purchasing. Plants allowed to sit around may be damaged by sun or dryness and may not recover.

Tear off the top of peat pots or bury them completely at planting time. If any of the peat pot sticks out of the soil it acts like a wick and dries out the rest of the pot. Roots have a difficult time getting through the dry, brittle peat.

Set plants at the same level they were growing at in the flat or container. Some individual plants have deeper planting depths suggested. Once the plants have been set they need water.

A bleached leaf on newly planted transplants indicates insufficient hardening off.

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