

"Big Three"

Annuals Offer Home Gardener Variety, Abundant Blooms

Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle in a single year. In one growing season they sprout from seeds, produce flowers and seeds and then die.

Despite the fact that they have to be planted every year, annuals are great plants for the home gardener because they are easy to grow, are quite inexpensive and produce an abundance of blooms over a long period of time.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE to annuals is that they give the gardener the chance to try out something different each year -- new sizes, new shapes and new color schemes.

Although there are literally hundreds of annuals that can be grown in local gardens, there are three that are most frequently chosen because they are easy to grow and are very colorful. There are more petunia plants sold than all other kinds of flowers put together. Other members of the Big Three group of annuals are marigolds and zinnias.

Petunias are popular because they are superb bedding plants and are also good in planter boxes, window boxes, pots, hanging baskets and other containers.

MARIGOLDS OFFER an even greater variety of forms -- although colors are limited to the yellow, gold and orange range. It is possible, however, to plant an entire garden with nothing but marigolds: three to four-foot tall kinds for a bushy background, two-foot tall kinds in the middle of the bed and some dwarfs for some front edging.

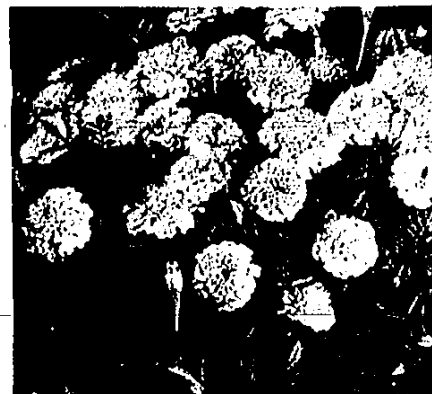
Check on glowing beauties with names like First Lady, Aquarius, Groovy and Fantastic. They really are fantastic, and there is nothing easier to grow in a sunny garden.

Zinnias are natives of Mexico, and they, too, like lots of sunshine. They come in an absolutely fantastic array of colors, including green. Just about every color is represented but blue.

Sizes range from tiny pompoms called Thumbelina Minis which are only four inches high. Other low ones are lilliputs and buttons. Largest of all are the California giants with six inch flowers on four foot plants.

OF SPECIAL INTEREST are the newly developed Peter Pan Zinnias, named for the boy who never grew up. These have three to four-inch flowers on plants that grow only a foot tall. They come in pink, plum or scarlet.

Marigolds range from dwarf to four foot tall.



Petunias come in assorted shades and patterns.



Coordinate Interior Decor With Outside Gardens

Have you ever thought of extending your interior decorating outside into the garden?

Just think of the advantages of using the same color schemes in the flower garden as you do in the house. Not only will you have bouquets to coordinate with your indoor decor, but the view from the windows will correlate well to visually expand the room into the out-of-doors.

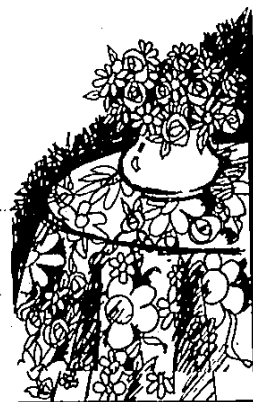
You may not be able to do this for every room in your house, but consider the possibilities for the main rooms -- the living room, family room, kitchen or dining area.

If you have used gold tones in carpeting, walls or furnishings, it is easy to plant a golden garden. Daffodils and tulips in cheerful golden yellows can start the season. Follow these with day lilies in tawny oranges, bright yellows, and apricot shades. Use marigolds liberally, and your golden garden is made: tall orange ones at the back of a bed, yellow pompoms in the center area, and a gay edging of spritely little ones in yellow marked with rich mahogany.

For a bit of contrast plant a heavenly - blue morning glory vine on the back fence, and tuck in plants of blue salvia and white baby's breath or white petunias. The blue and the white will make the gold and yellow really sing.

IF YOUR DECOR runs to pinks and rose, start the season with pink tulips and hyacinths. Use pink roses and old fashioned clove pinks or sweet william, and lots of phlox in mid-summer. Fill the flower beds with pink and white cosmos, pink and mauve asters, pink zinnias and beds of pink and rose petunias.

Red, white and blue can be your scheme for a patriotic theme: red and white tulips and blue forget-me-nots, then white alyssum, blue lobelia and bright red geraniums. Or try red roses, red phlox, blue delphinium, and white daisies and lilies. Use red salvia, red zinnias and white petunias to fill your beds, with ageratum and campanula for blue edging.



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