

flowers

Annuals: They're easy, colorful and inexpensive

Annuals are the beginning gardener's delight: They are easy to grow, produce colorful flowers in abundance and are inexpensive.

The first and most important step in growing annuals is to prepare the soil for planting. A good way to condition your soil for planting. A good way to condition your soil is to add 6 to 9 inches of organic matter, such as peat moss, manure or compost, to the surface.

Next, work the soil with a shovel or digging fork and break it up into small particles. This will allow the air to move more easily so your plants can drain properly and will get enough oxygen for root growth.

You can start from seeds or buy started transplants at your local nursery or garden center. You should choose plants with compact foliage and good leaf color. Even through you'll get better results from younger plants.

Also, fresh stock is always better than plants that have been held for a number of weeks. It's a good idea to find out from your nurseryman the shipment dates of the annuals before you decide to buy.

Once you've selected your transplants, keep them well watered until planting time. An overcast day or the cooler parts

of the day, morning or evening, in the early spring are the best transplant times.

Whenever you transplant nursery stock, keep these following points in mind.

- Make sure the planting bed is watered thoroughly.

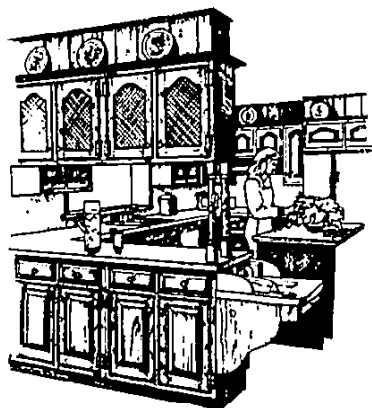
- Don't plant dry plants. Water them thoroughly before removing from containers and allow them to drain 5 to 10 minutes.

- Take plants out of their containers one by one to keep the root ball from drying out. If removing from cell packs, squeeze the bottom of the containers to force the root ball above the lip of the pack.

- Plant annuals slightly deeper than they were in the container; firm the soil lightly around them.

You might also want to protect your plants from the wind and sun with newspaper hoods, or commercially available hot packs for a day or two until they "catch."

Now that you've got your annuals off to a good start, keep them moist. A deep soaking is far better than frequent, light applications of water. Before you know it, you'll have a full bloom of color in your garden.



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Flowers:

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Transplants:

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