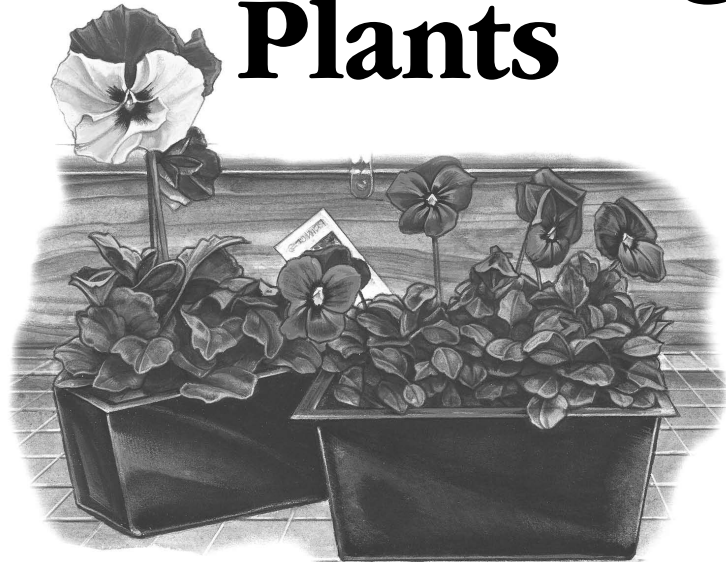


Annual Bedding Plants



What are bedding plants? Many bedding plants are annual plants that complete their life cycles in a single growing season. Others are actually tender perennials that we treat as annuals in temperate regions of the country. Still others are bulbs, herbs, ground covers, vegetables, small fruits, or woody plants.

Clearly, the term bedding plant is not a botanical classification but a term that describes plants that share a common method of production and marketing. Bedding plants are produced in greenhouses, grown and sold in market flats, and marketed in retail stores, such as mass-market outlets or garden centers.

Bedding plants have several advantages over other groups of plants in the landscape. Seeds of many bedding plants are easy to purchase, germinate, and grow at home. Therefore, it is an exciting hobby to shop in mail order catalogs for new and different types of plants that may not be available in your local retail outlets. Bedding plants are less expensive than other garden plants; however, they are, by definition, temporary plants. This may be considered an advantage or a disadvantage. Soil for bedding plants must be reworked and the beds replanted each season. This provides an opportunity to try new and different types of bedding plants and to experiment with creating new designs. Bedding plants are adapted to a wide variety of growing conditions and are generally easy to care for.

Choosing Bedding Plants

The ideal bedding plant is one that blooms quickly after planting, is free of insects or diseases, is heat and drought tolerant, continues to bloom for a long time, has attractive flowers and foliage that suits your design purpose, and is a plant you like. In recent years, plant breeders have developed improved versions of existing bedding plants and introduced new plants to the market. They have developed plants that grow more compactly, produce more flowers, tolerate heat and drought better, tolerate more shade or sun, and come in an amazing range of flower colors.

How do you decide what to grow? First, make friends with experienced gardeners in your area, visit them, and see what plants they grow successfully. If there is an active garden club in your area, join the club and discuss with the members what plants perform well for them. Public gardens and display or trial gardens in your area provide

opportunities to view plants in garden settings. Be sure to take pen and paper to write down plant names and a camera to take pictures. When shopping in seed catalogs, look for the All-American Selections symbol. All-American Selections is a nonprofit organization that conducts trials of new and old bedding plant cultivars across the nation. Cultivars that have won an AAS award should perform well almost anywhere in the country. Other sources of good information are the World Wide Web, gardening magazines, gardening television programs, and articles in local newspapers. See Table 1 for a list of bedding plants and their characteristics.

Determining Bedding Plant Seasons

Bedding plants have many uses in the landscape. They can be planted in flower beds (plantings that can be walked around and viewed from all sides) or flower borders (plantings with a backdrop, such as a fence, building, or woody plants, on one or two sides) to provide temporary seasonal color. Plant them in containers to accent decks, patios, or entrances to the home. Bedding plants can also be used in theme gardens, such as cut flower gardens or butterfly and hummingbird gardens.

Traditionally, bedding plants have been planted in the spring for spring and summer color. In the Southeast, a second planting season is often made in the fall with the planting of pansies. However, with the long growing season and mild winters in the Southeast, it is possible to plant in four seasons and have color all year round. The first planting of the year can be made in early spring, often as early as late February or March, using semihardy annuals. Semihardy annuals can take some frost and will grow and flower in the spring and early summer but will

not withstand summer heat. They include sweet peas, pot marigolds, English daisies, larkspurs, hybrid petunias, snapdragons, swan river daisies, English wallflowers, and sweet alyssum. The second planting using tender annuals can be made in the spring when the chance of frost has passed. Tender annuals cannot take frost but will withstand summer heat. The list of tender annuals is extensive, ranging from annual vincas to zinnias. The third planting, using semihardy annuals a second time in the year, can be made in the fall when temperatures begin to moderate in late September or early October. The fourth planting, using hardy annuals, can be made in early winter from mid October to November. Hardy annuals take considerable frost and include pansies, Johnny-jump-ups, China pinks, ornamental cabbage/kale, and hardy cultivars of snapdragon (Liberty or Sonnet series).

Obtaining Plants

The first decision to make in choosing annual bedding plants is whether to purchase bedding plant transplants from a retail outlet or to grow plants from seed. Purchased transplants are convenient, require less time, and have less risk of crop failure than those started from seed have. However, transplants cost more, and the choice of species and cultivars may be limited in retail outlets. Starting bedding plants from seed provides the opportunity to grow a wider variety of cultivars and to try uncommon annuals. After trying both approaches, many gardeners choose to do a little of both. They start from seed those plants whose seeds are easy to handle and germinate, and they purchase transplants of plants whose seeds are difficult to handle or germinate poorly.

You can easily get on the mailing list of a variety of seed companies. Simply call the seed company and request a catalog or request one through the company's World Wide Web site. New catalogs are usually mailed each year just after Christmas. Winter is a good time to plan bedding plant plantings for the next year and to order seed. Seed companies can deliver the order more quickly and completely if you place the order early. As spring approaches, make a planning list to help with the garden design and seed sowing. The planning list should include the names of all the plants you order along with flower color, plant height, plant spacing, and seed sowing dates. Most seed catalog descriptions state the number of weeks before the last frost that the seed should be sown. This information is also on the seed package. The actual sowing dates will depend on your climatic zone and when the last frost is expected.

When purchasing bedding plants from retail outlets, be aware that the quality of the plants can vary from one retail outlet to another and from one shipment to another even at the same store. If the quality is not good at one store, go to another one. Purchase stocky, compact plants with short, thick stems, many side branches, and a healthy green foliage color. Avoid stretched plants with yellow lower leaves. Don't insist on buying plants with many open flowers. Green plants with few flowers open will usually grow more and better fill the area allotted in the garden. Examine the shoots for insects or diseases, especially on the underside of leaves. Avoid plants with yellow

spots, burned leaf margins, or excessive lower leaf loss. Pull some plants out of their containers and examine the roots. Roots should fill the container completely so the soil and plant come out as one unit with no excess roots toward the bottom. The roots should be white with visible root hairs close to the root tips. Avoid plants with black or brown roots.

Deciding Where to Plant

In landscaping, bedding plants are synonymous with dramatic garden color. They are the landscaper's "paintbrush and color pallet" because no other group of plants provides as wide a range of flower colors over as long a time as bedding plants do. Bedding plants are often used as focal points to draw the eye of the viewer along an overall design or to highlight an object of interest in the landscape. Because they are strong visual items, it is easy to over use them, especially in the formal area at the front of the home. Locating two or more focal points within a small area can be visually confusing. The best way to determine harmonious yet effective locations for bedding plants is to walk through the landscape and examine all viewpoints. Some natural positions for bedding plants are at the corner of outdoor rooms where border lines converge, around hardscape items, or near the entryway to the home.

Many landscape problems can be addressed using bedding plants. They can provide quick growth and early color to new landscapes while waiting for more permanent trees and shrubs to develop. Use bedding plants to fill voids in newly planted shrubbery. Colorful bedding plants can create interest in established landscapes. A small flower bed or planter box near an entrance can help emphasize the public area of a home. Bedding plants in the private area of a yard can enhance outdoor family living and entertaining.

Give some thought to flower color combinations when planning a bed layout. The primary colors on a color wheel are red, yellow, and blue; all other colors on the color wheel are derived from mixing primary colors. Placing primary flower colors next to each other in a design produces a strong contrast that may not be pleasing. Make transitions using shades and tints of primary colors. Several color combinations have been developed that are pleasing to the eye. A monochromatic scheme uses one color combined with shades and tints of that same color. Supplement this scheme with white flowers or plants with silver or gray foliage. White, gray, or silver goes with almost any color scheme. An analogous color scheme uses any two colors adjacent to each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and yellow-green or yellow and yellow-orange. Complementary colors are any two colors across from each other on the color wheel, such as yellow and blue or red and green. It often works well to make one of the two complementary colors dominant and use the other as an accent. White and light blue or yellow-colored flowers brighten shaded areas while dark-colored flowers tend to disappear. On the other hand, pastel-colored flowers tend to fade in full sun.

Consider the cultural requirements of bedding plants when choosing a site in the landscape. Many bedding

plants require full sun or at least 6 hours of sun per day. Others do well in shade. These two groups generally cannot be mixed in the same planting. Most bedding plants require well-drained soil. If the soil is constantly wet or packed into tight clay, correct the problems before planting by incorporating lots of organic matter into the soil and planting on raised beds.

Planning Steps

When you have decided on a location for planting, lay out the overall dimensions of the bed or border. If the planting is rectilinear or in a straight line, lay out the area using stakes and string. If the planting is curvilinear or in a curved line, lay out the area using a garden hose or thick rope. Measure the planting area with a tape measure and draw the planting to scale on grid or graph paper. Generally, a scale of 1 square on the grid paper equaling 1 square foot works well. Place the plants in the design using masses of color in the shape of irregular bubbles for an informal design or in regular-shaped masses for formal designs. Use the planning list you made in the winter when ordering seed to get plant heights and plant spacing correct. Remember to place tall plants in the middle or in the back for beds or borders, respectively. Place low mounding or creeping plants along the edge and fill between with moderate-sized plants. If the bed is long and narrow, such as along a walk, create a small design and repeat the design down the length of the bed with some variations to create a sense of rhythm. When the design is completed, count the number of squares in each plant mass to determine how many plants of each type you will need.

Growing Transplants

If you ordered bedding plant seeds from a seed company in the winter, the seeds probably arrived well before the correct time for sowing. First, write the date of purchase on the seed packages so you will know in the future how old the seeds are. Bedding plant seeds vary in how long they remain viable, but germination rates often decrease after 3 to 5 years. If you are uncertain about the viability of older seeds, place 10 seeds on a moist paper towel, roll it into a tube, and place it in a zip-lock plastic bag. Begin checking the seeds every couple of days until complete germination occurs. Count the germinated seeds to see how many of the 10 seeds germinated. If 50 to 80 percent germinated, plan to sow more seeds than the plants you need. If the germination rate is less than 50 percent, you may want to throw away the old seeds and order new seeds.

Store seeds correctly to maintain their viability. Seed viability increases under dry, cool conditions so place the seed packages in airtight containers, such as mason jars. Include a desiccant, such as packages of silica gel or powdered milk or baking soda wrapped in cloth bags, in the storage container. Place the storage jars in the vegetable keeper section of your refrigerator. Do not store seeds in the freezer.

When, according to your planning list, time has arrived to sow your bedding plant seeds, you will need a

potting mix and containers to sow the seed in. Many different brands of potting mixes designed for germinating seeds are available in garden centers and mass-market outlets. These will be labeled "germination mix" or "seeding mix." Generally, they have a finer texture and have a higher water-holding capacity than regular potting mixes have. Likewise, you can choose from a wide range of choices of containers, including small plastic or clay pots, peat pots, or pellets and fiber blocks or cubes. You can also purchase plastic flats with many individual cells that you fill with germination mix. Sow the seeds and cover with a clear plastic dome. Keep in mind that we frequently throw away in our homes and businesses many containers that could be used to germinate seeds. These include cardboard milk cartons, egg cartons, and paper or Styrofoam cups. All containers for germinating seeds should have drainage holes.

Because bedding plant seeds come in a variety of sizes, different strategies are needed for their germination. Large seeds that can be easily picked up one at a time can be sown individually in small pots or in individual cells of a flat. Sow large seeds in the germination mix at a depth of about two to three times the seed width. Seeds that are too small to handle can be sown in rows in an open flat filled with germinating mix. Form shallow trenches in the mix with a pot label and sow the seed by tapping the open seed package or pour the seed into a folded index card and tap the card. Several inexpensive devices are on the market for sowing small seeds. Check the seed package for directions on whether to cover the seed and for what germination conditions to provide. A light covering of fine vermiculite is beneficial in germinating many seeds because it holds water next to the seeds.

A few bedding plant species, such as sunflowers, resent transplanting and perform best if the seed is sown directly in the garden. A common mistake in direct sowing is sowing seed too deep. Again, follow directions on the seed package. Water the seeds immediately after sowing and watch them carefully to be sure that they do not dry out. Another mistake is sowing warm-season annuals, such as annual vinca and impatiens, too early. Seeds of these plants will not germinate until the soil warms to 65 degrees F. Lastly, do not sow seeds too close together. Some thinning of seedlings may be necessary but don't make the task difficult. Do not delay the thinning task. Thinned seedlings can be moved to a new location.

After the seeds are sown, label each container and water the germinating media by submerging the containers in a shallow pan of water to allow water to be absorbed through the drainage holes. Overhead watering of small seeds frequently washes them too deep into the medium and can interfere with germination. To raise the relative humidity, cover the containers with plastic wrap or place them in a plastic bag. Put the containers in a warm place with bright light but not in direct sunlight. Check the containers daily for germination. When the first seedling appears, open a crack in the covering material to reduce the relative humidity. After the majority of seedlings have germinated, remove the covering material and place the seedlings in light appropriate to the species to prevent them from stretching. Begin liquid fertilization of the seed-

lings when two mature leaves have unfolded. Use a complete, water-soluble fertilizer (20-20-20 or 15-30-15) at one-fourth the concentration recommended on the package. Apply fertilizer every three out of four times the medium requires water.

Seedlings sown in rows in open flats should be transplanted to larger containers as soon as the seedlings can be handled (2 to 3 mature leaves). The seedlings will stretch and become difficult to transplant if they are left in open flats too long. Lift the seedlings out of the medium using a plant label or spoon, retaining as much of the root system as possible. Handle the seedlings by the leaves, not by the stems. Plant the seedlings into cell flats or individual pots containing potting mix at the same depth they were growing in the open flat. Water the transplanted seedlings and place them in light appropriate to the species. Begin fertilizing with a water-soluble fertilizer when plants resume growing, using a concentration that is one-half the recommendation on the fertilizer package. Grow transplants in a large window with a wide sill, a cold frame, a hot bed, or a hobby greenhouse until they are a size that is ready to be planted in the garden.

Be prepared to plant the bedding plants into the garden as soon as they fill the containers and have sufficient root development. Drop a few plants out of their containers periodically and examine the roots. If enough roots are present for transplanting, the plant and potting mix should come out of the pot as one unit, and the mix should be covered in roots. However, do not allow the plants to become pot-bound (roots circling the bottom of the pot). Many bedding plants that become pot-bound will cease vegetative growth early and flower prematurely. When transplanted into the garden, these plants will always be small and unable to fill the space allotted to them.

Establishing the Garden

Prepare the soil in the beds ahead of time and have a source of water and mulch ready. Remove the existing vegetation and work the soil with a shovel or rotary tiller to a depth of at least 8 to 10 inches. Work 3 to 4 inches of organic matter, limestone, and fertilizer into the soil, according to the requirements indicated by a soil test. Contact your county Extension agent for information on soil testing services. Smooth the soil surface and plant the transplants at the same level they were growing in the containers. Use the bed design to place plants correctly. If the design is complex, use stakes and string to create a temporary square foot grid corresponding to the grids on the bed design. Plant the transplants at the same depth they were growing in the original containers. Do not plant too deep. After planting, mulch the bed to a depth of 2 to 3 inches and water the bed slowly and completely, preferably using a sprinkler. After the sprinkler has run for awhile, dig into the soil in several places to see how far water has reached. Water at least 6 to 8 inches deep.

Fertilizing Bedding Plants

Work a complete fertilizer into the soil before planting. The rates and types of fertilizer to use should be based on a soil test. Many different fertilization procedures can be used successfully after planting. The following are three commonly used in Alabama.

- *Dry, inexpensive fertilizers*, such as 8-8-8, 13-13-13, and 15-0-15, and fertilizer salts, such as ammonium nitrate, are difficult to use on bedding plants. They are difficult to apply uniformly and can easily burn tender plants if applied too heavily, resulting in plant damage. The primary advantage of using these fertilizers is that they cost much less than liquid or slow-release materials cost. However, fertilizers are only a small part of your overall costs. If you use dry fertilizer, broadcast it over the plants at a rate of 2 to 3 pounds per 100 square feet and then rinse the foliage immediately with a hose to prevent foliar damage.
- *Water-soluble fertilizers* can be used on bedding plants. Because only small amounts of fertilizer are applied at one time using this method, plants will not usually be burned as they are with dry fertilizers. Plant growth is improved with this method because the fertility level is kept constant at all times. The primary disadvantages of liquid fertilizers are that they need to be applied regularly (usually once a week) and they cost more than dry fertilizers cost.
- *Slow-release fertilizers* are an excellent choice for the homeowner because they can be applied once with little chance of burning the plants and will give excellent growth for much of the growing season. Slow-release fertilizers do not leach from sandy soils quickly so fewer applications will be needed. Some formulations include 12-6-6, 18-6-12, and 14-14-14. Follow directions on the container.

Maintaining Transplants

The most crucial time for watering transplants is during the first 3 to 4 weeks. Check the soil moisture at least a couple of times a week and water as needed. After this time, plants should develop roots into the soil and require only weekly checking. Generally, bedding plants need 1 inch of water per week if water is not supplied by rainfall. A rain gauge is a good investment. Proper planting makes future maintenance easier, but it does not eliminate it. Some plants have a tendency to grow tall and spindly rather than compact. Pinching out the tips of young shoots forces the plants to branch low and produces more flowers on short, stocky stems. Most plants get tall as the season advances so cut them back severely to assure a later blooming period. To maintain vigorous growth of plants, remove mature flowers and seed pods. This is particularly desirable for ageratums, calendulas, cosmos, marigolds, pansies, rudbeckias, or zinnias.

Table 1. Characteristics of Selected Annual Bedding Plants

Plant	Where to Plant ¹	Cold Tolerance ²	Color ³	Time of Bloom ⁴	Height (inches)	Spacing (inches)	Comments
African Marigold <i>(Tagetes erecta)</i>	S	T	Y,O	Su	12-36	12-18	Easy to grow. Requires deadheading.
Ageratum <i>(Ageratum houstonianum)</i>	S-P	T	B,W,P	Sp-F	8-18	10-12	Good edging plant. Flowers rot in high heat and humidity. Plant again in fall.
Alyssum <i>(Lobularia maritima)</i>	S-P	T	W,P	Sp-F	6-9	9	Good for edging; fragrant. Flowers decline in midsummer.
Annual Vinca <i>(Catharanthus roseus)</i>	S	T	R,W,P	Sp-F	6-12	8	Very heat and drought tolerant. Plant after soil warms. Avoid overhead irrigation.
Bachelor Button <i>(Centaurea cyannus)</i>	S	T	B,P,W,P,R	Sp-Su	12-24	12	One of the few blue flowers. A good cut flower, fresh or dried.
Balsam <i>(Impatiens balsamina)</i>	P	T	V	Sp-Su	12-24	12	Good for patios, rock gardens. Camellialike flowers.
Begonia (Wax) <i>(Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum)</i>	S-P	T	W,O,R	Sp-F	6-12	12	Many varieties available. Perpetual bloomer. Needs consistent soil moisture.
Black-eyed Susan <i>(Rudbeckia hirta)</i>	S	T	Y,O	Su-F	12-24	12-18	Heat and drought tolerant. Avoid overhead irrigation. Deadhead flowers.
Calendula <i>(Calendula officinalis)</i>	S-P	H	O,Y	F-Sp	9-18	12	May survive winter and bloom in March in South Alabama. Late fall or early spring plant.
Calliopsis <i>(Coreopsis tinctoria)</i>	S	T	Y,O,R	Su-F	24-36	12	Heat and drought tolerant. Native wildflower.
California Poppy <i>(Eschscholzia Californica)</i>	S	H	Y,O,W, R	Sp-Su	10-12	6-8	Flowers close in evening. Direct sow, transplants poorly.
China Pinks <i>(Dianthus chinensis)</i>	S-P	H	R,P,M	F-Sp	10-18	10-12	Excellent for cutting; fragrant. Flowers fall and spring, green in winter.
China Aster <i>(Collistephus chinensis)</i>	P	T	V	F	12-36	12	Excellent cut flower. Spray for insects and diseases. Aster yellows virus a problem.
Christmas Cherry <i>(Solanum pseudocapsicum)</i>	S-P	T	M	Su	12-15	10-12	Withstands dry location. Fruit not eatable.
Cockscomb Celosia <i>(Celosia argentea cristata)</i>	S	T	V	Sp-Su	8-36	8-24	“Brain-shaped” flower heads. Flowers rot with rain and high humidity. Some cut flowers.
Coleus <i>(Coleus blumeli)</i>	S-Sh	T	M,G,R	Su	24-30	18-24	Colorful foliage; easy to grow. Heat tolerant. Seed types for shade. Cutting types for sun.
Cup Flowers <i>(Nierembergia bippomanica)</i>	S-P	T	B,W	Sp-Su	9-12	10-12	Excellent for rock gardens. Dainty white or violet-blue flower. Protect from wind.
Creeping Zinnia <i>(Zinnia angustifolia)</i>	S	T	Y,O,W	Su	10-15	8-12	Good border or hanging plant; heat and drought tolerant.
Dahlia <i>(Dahlia spp.)</i>	S-P	T	M	Su	18-24	18-20	Excellent cut flower. Spray for spider mites.
Dusty Miller <i>(Senecio cineraria)</i>	S-P	T	W	Sp-F	8-24	12	Easy to grow. Colorful. Foliage covered with dustlike down.
Egyptian Star Flower <i>(Pentas lanceolata)</i>	S-P	T	V	Su	12-24	18-24	Heat and drought tolerant. Good butterfly attractant.
English Daisy <i>(Bellis perennis)</i>	S	H	V	Sp	10-12	10	Plant in fall with pansies for spring bloom. Very cold hardy.

Table 1. Characteristics of Selected Annual Bedding Plants (continued)

Plant	Where to Plant ¹	Cold Tolerance ²	Color ³	Time of Bloom ⁴	Height (inches)	Spacing (inches)	Comments
Fan Flower (<i>Scaevola aemula</i>)	S	T	B,P	Su	4-9	18	Spreading, ground cover annual. Heat and drought tolerant. Well-drained soil.
Flowering Maple (<i>Abutilon x hybridum</i>)	S-P	T	Y,O,R,W	Su	12-36	24	Rich soil, consistent soil moisture. Pinch to stimulate bushiness.
Flowering Tobacco (<i>Nicotiana x sanderae</i>)	P	T	V	Su	12-24	12	Sucking insects (aphids) a problem. Flowers close when temperature > 85°F.
French Marigold (<i>Tagetes patula</i>)	S	T	Y,O,R	Su	8-15	6-8	Easy to grow; many varieties.
Geranium (<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>)	S-P	T	W,R,P	Su	18-24	24	New varieties are easy to grow. Some need deadheading.
Globe Amaranth (<i>Gomphrena globosa</i>)	S	T	P,R,W	Su	24-36	18-24	Heat and drought tolerant. Holds color well as a dried flower.
Hollyhock (<i>Alcea rosea</i>)	S	H	R,W,V	Su	36-72	12	Some varieties are perennial; excellent background plant.
Impatiens (<i>Impatiens walleriana</i>)	P-Sh	T	V	Su	12-24	12-24	Blooms in deep shade better than other annuals; water often.
Johnny Jump Up (<i>Viola tricolor</i>)	S-P	H	V	F-W- Sp	6-9	9	Better winter annual than most pansies. Many exciting new flower colors.
Joseph's Coat (<i>Amaranthus tricolor</i>)	S	T	R,Y,G	Su	10-15	6-8	Easy to grow; striking border; grows in dry locations.
Larkspur (<i>Consolida ambigua</i>)	S	H	V	F-Sp	24-36	18	Direct sow seed in the garden in the fall. Powdery mildew and fusarium problem in the heat.
Lobelia (<i>Lobelia erinus</i>)	P-Sh	T	B,P,W	Sp-F	8-10	4-6	Grows best during cool temperatures; edging plant. Cut back in midsummer for better fall flowering.
Love-in-a-mist (<i>Nigella damascena</i>)	S	T	B,W	Su	12-24	18	Interesting flower structure. Used as cut flower. Direct sow in garden.
Love-lies-bleeding (<i>Amaranthus caudatus</i>)	S-P	T	R	Su	24-60	24	Pendulous tassel flowers. Rich soil. Consistent soil moisture. Good dried flower.
Mealycup Sage (<i>Salvia farinacea</i>)	S-P	T	B,P,W	Su	18-24	12-18	Heat and drought tolerant. May be perennial in Deep South.
Melampodium (<i>Melampodium paludosum</i>)	S	T	Y	Sp-F	16-24	12-24	Heat and drought tolerant. Tolerates poor soil. Can flop over in midsummer.
Mexican Heather (<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i>)	S	T	P	Su	12-24	24	Heat and drought tolerant. Attractive over a long period.
Mexican Sunflower (<i>Tithonia rotundifolia</i>)	S	T	O	Su	36-96	48	Large annual. Dwarf cultivars available. Butterfly attractant.
Monkey Flower (<i>Mimulus x hybridus</i>)	P	T	V	Su	12-24	18	Needs consistent soil moisture. Prefers warm days and cool nights.
Moss Rose (<i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>)	S	T	M	Su	6-8	12	Good ground cover. Well-drained soil. Heat and drought tolerant.
Nasturtium (<i>Tropaeolum spp.</i>)	S	T	M	Sp-F	12	6-8	Climbing or trailing cultivars available; fragrant.

Table 1. Characteristics of Selected Annual Bedding Plants (continued)

Plant	Where to Plant ¹	Cold Tolerance ²	Color ³	Time of Bloom ⁴	Height (inches)	Spacing (inches)	Comments
New Guinea Impatiens (<i>Impatiens hawkeri</i>)	P	T	V	Su	12-36	24	Larger plant and flowers than impatiens; water often.
Ornamental Pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i>)	S	T	O,R,Y	Su	10-12	10-12	Heat and drought tolerant. Fruit not eatable.
Ornamental Cabbage & Kale (<i>Brassica oleracea</i>)	S	H	G,P,W	F-W-Sp	10-12	9-15	Cool season plant producing showy foliage from fall to late spring.
Pansy (<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>)	S-P	H	M,R,Y	F-W-Sp	10-12	6-8	Blooms through winter in South Alabama. Excellent with spring bulbs or for fall planting.
Persian Shield (<i>Strobilanthes dyerianus</i>)	S	T	G,P	Sp-Su	36-60	36	Grown for purple- and silver-streaked foliage. Pinch early and often to keep bushy.
Petunia (<i>Petunia x hybrida</i>)	S	T	V	Sp-Su	10-18	8-10	The most popular annual; fragrant; easy to grow but not heat tolerant.
Plumed Celosia (<i>Celosia argentea plumosa</i>)	S	T	R,O,Y,M	Su	12-48	10-18	Good for dried arrangements; often reseeds; easy to grow.
Polka Dot Plant (<i>Hypoestes phyllostachya</i>)	S-P	T	P,R,W	Su	24-36	24	Grown for colorful spotted leaves. Flowers usually removed.
Red Salvia (<i>Salvia coccinea</i>)	P	T	R	Su	12-36	24	Inflorescence more open than scarlet sage. Better weather tolerance than scarlet sage.
Scarlet Sage (<i>Salvia splendens</i>)	S-P	T	R,P,W	Su	12-24	10-12	Excellent background plants; easy to grow.
Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>)	S-P	H	V	Sp	8-36	10-15	Good cut flower; fragrant. Can plant in fall or early spring.
Spider Flower (<i>Cleome hassleriana</i>)	S	T	W,P,R	Su	36-60	24	Can direct sow seed. May reseed vigorously.
Strawflower (<i>Helichrysum bracteatum</i>)	S	T	V	Su	12-36	24	Flowers strawlike to the touch. Needs well-drained soil. Root rot in wet soil.
Sulphur Cosmos (<i>Cosmos sulphureus</i>)	S	T	Y,O	Su	12-36	18-24	Butterfly and bee attractant. Deadhead flowers.
Summer Snapdragon (<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>)	S	T	W,P,B,M	Su	24-48	24	Heat and drought tolerant. Needs well-drained soil.
Sunflower (<i>Helianthus annuus</i>)	S	T	Y,O,R	Su	36-84	12	Bright flowers; good background or screen; unsightly late in summer.
Sweet Pea (<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>)	S	H	V	Sp	36-60	12-18	Good background plant; fragrant. Plant seed in fall or early spring.
Tall Cosmos (<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>)	S	T	V	Su	36-48	18-24	Deadhead flowers. Good cut flower.
Thunbergia (<i>Thunbergia alata</i>)	S	T	O,Y	Su	60-72	8-10	Often called black-eyed susan vine. Good climbing or hanging plant.
Trailing Petunia (<i>Calibrachoa x hybrida</i>)	S	T	R,P,Y,B	Su	3-6	36-48	Low, spreading ground cover. Heat and drought tolerant.

Table 1. Characteristics of Selected Annual Bedding Plants (continued)

Plant	Where to Plant ¹	Cold Tolerance ²	Color ³	Time of Bloom ⁴	Height (inches)	Spacing (inches)	Comments
Treasure Flower (<i>Gazania rigens</i>)	S	T	V	Su	9-18	18	Heat and drought tolerant. Well-drained soil.
Verbena (<i>Verbena x hybrida</i>)	S	H	V	Su	8-18	24-36	Vining habit. Heat and drought tolerant.
Wishbone Flower (<i>Torenia fournieri</i>)	P	T	V	Su	6-12	6	Needs consistent soil moisture and protection from afternoon sun.
Zinnia (<i>Zinnia elegans</i>)	S	T	Y,O,R,M	Su	12-36	12-15	Good cut flower; check varieties; easy to grow. Watch for powdery mildew.

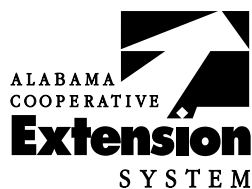
¹S-Sun; P-Partial Shade; Sh-Shade

²H-Hardy; T-Tender

³B-Blue; G-Green; O-Orange; P-Purple; R-Red; W-White; Y-Yellow; M-Mixed; V-Variety of colors available.

⁴Sp-Spring; Su-Summer; F-Fall; W-Winter

Several of the above plants are perennials but may be grown as annual bedding plants. Color, time of bloom, height, and spacing are general; they may vary according to varieties.



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