

# Quick Tips for Buying and Planting Summer Annual Plants

► Discover the best time to plant annuals and how to choose plants and prepare planting beds.

## When to Plant Annuals

Planting early in the spring season will ensure root systems develop properly before high temperatures arrive. Below are the planting seasons for Alabama.

Planting Dates for Summer Annuals in Alabama

Region	Planting Date
North Alabama	May 1–30
Central Alabama	April 20–May 10
South Alabama	April 15–May 15

## Sun Versus Shade

It is important to match the plant's sunlight requirements with the amount of sunlight the planting bed receives.

Shade Plants	Part Shade Plants	Sun Plants
0 hours sunlight	0–4 hours sunlight	6+ hours sunlight
No direct sunlight	Early morning sunlight only	Direct sun after noon

Three easy plants for shade:

- Coleus
- Impatiens
- Caladium

Three easy plants for part-shade:

- Wax Begonia
- New Guinea Impatiens
- Wishbone Flower

Three easy plants for full sun:

- Lantana
- Creeping Zinnia
- Salvia



**Figure 1.** A sunny annual border planted with New Guinea impatiens and ornamental peppers.



**Figure 2.** A partial shade garden is brightened using a pink and white color scheme, including pentas, caladium, and wishbone flower.



**Figure 3.** A healthy annual plant has white tipped roots that reach the edge of the pot without being pot bound.

## Choose Healthy Plants

Choosing healthy plants at the garden center is the first step to a successful annual planting. Look for annual plants with these characteristics.

### Healthy Plant Checklist:

- ❑ Healthy, bright white roots that fill out the pot
- ❑ Stocky, strong stems
- ❑ Many flower buds but few open flowers
- ❑ Good branching off the main stem
- ❑ No yellowing or spotted leaves
- ❑ No signs of insect damage

## Preparing the Planting Bed

Annual plants require well-drained, fertile soil because they expend great amounts of energy on flower production. Planting beds should be prepared using the following steps to create a good environment for them to thrive.

### Planting Bed Prep Steps:

1. Remove groundcovers such as sod from the area using herbicides or digging out plants.
2. Till area to a depth of 8-10 inches.
3. Add and till in 4 inches of organic matter and any fertilizers recommended in your soil test report. Visit your local Extension Office for a soil test kit.
4. Smooth soil and slope beds away from buildings. Slope the edges to improve drainage.
5. Plant bedding annuals at recommended distance on the plant label, taking care not to plant too deeply or shallowly.
6. Cover the entire bed with 2 inches of pine bark mulch or straw. Be careful not to cover plant stems in mulch.
7. Water as needed. Initially, plants should be watered every few days. Once established, plants should receive 1 inch of water per week if not supplied by rainfall.



**Allyson Shabel**, *Urban Regional Extension Agent*, Alabama A&M University.  
Original Author: **J. Raymond Kessler, Jr., Ph.D.**, *Horticulture Professor*, Auburn University

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