

Homes & Gardens

Annuals give garden instant colour

If you want colour in your garden and you want it fast, annuals are the answer. Annuals only grow for one year and then die, while perennials come back year after year. However, most perennials take two to three years before they hit their peak flowering stage and provide vibrant colour. Also, they tend to bloom for just a few weeks of the year.

Annuals often bloom from spring until frost, trying to make as many seeds as possible for the following year. To get your garden looking great in no time, here are a few tips:

- Buy larger plants. The larger the plant, the more mature and ready it will

be to flower.

- Prepare the flower bed soil. Bad soil will halt the flowering of the best plants. Be sure to work in plenty of compost or peat moss for an excellent base. Work at least four inches of soil in a new bed and two inches in a mature bed.

- Plant seeds outdoors. The risk of frost must have passed, but planting seed directly into the soil bed will spring like magic. Fast growers include cosmos, marigolds, zinnias and sunflowers.

- Fertilize. Especially in areas where nutrients have been flushed out by frequent watering. Fertilizing will encour-

age maximum height and bloom. However, don't over fertilize — you'll encourage plants to produce more stems and less flowers.

- Houseplants. Flowering houseplants can make a great addition to your garden. Sink the plant, pot and all, into your garden. You should be able to pull it out at the end of the season and bring it back indoors.

Some other plants that provide fast colour are: Ageratum, Begonias, Celosia, Geraniums, Globe amaranth, Heliotrope, Impatiens, Lanata, Periwinkle, Petunias, Salvia, Scaevola, and Verbena.

-Home Depot

Trees must be planted properly to survive

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grow without interference with the house, other structures or services such as overhead wires or sewer pipes.

3) For each tree, prepare a shallow planting area, about 30 cm deep, and five times the diameter of the soil ball by spading the entire area and adding small amounts of the peat moss, cattle manure, or other soil amendments. This preparation is not a hole but rather like preparing a garden bed for planting of annual flowers or vegetable transplants.

4) Dig a hole in the middle of this prepared area and set the soil ball and spread out the bare roots in the hole. Remove the tree's plastic pot with the soil as moist as possible so that will hold together. (Remember, the paper fiber pot stays on.)

It is most important that the top of the soil ball be exactly even with, or perhaps slightly above, the level of the soil. Obviously all roots should be in the soil! Lightly pack the soil in place surrounding the tree. Do not pack the soil down hard. Use water to remove air pockets in the soil.

If the tree is unable to withstand anticipated winds, then provide a strong stake, out at least 20 cm from the trunk. Remove the stake and ties nine months after planting. Bark mulch applied to the original prepared area will also help preserve soil moisture, but it should not touch the tree trunk.

Thanks to Art Drysdale for the input and advice on planting trees.

Brian Burton is a regular contributor to many of Canada's leading landscaping and gardening publications. Mr. Burton is

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