

Home Renovations, Decor, Furnishing...

# A Bed of Colour is Easy to Create

(MS) - If you've admired a neighbor's flower-filled landscape, but didn't know where to start to beautify your own yard, follow this simple advice: Start small. A single flowerbed is easy to create in a weekend or less and will stay colorful all summer long.

## PLAN BEFORE YOU PLANT

Look around your yard for a logical focal point for a flowerbed. Do you have a small tree or a large flowering shrub? Or how about a birdbath, sundial or some other object that will be taller than your plants when they're fully grown? Pay attention to how much sun the area receives - is it in the sun most of the day or only a few hours? This will be important when selecting plants.

Use a tape measure to determine the size of your new bed. Keep it small: 3 feet across or less is ideal, so you can reach plants growing toward the center or close to the back. Sketch the dimensions of the bed on graph paper. On another page, make two columns for notes on shorter and taller plants. Then, take both with you to visit your local home or garden center.

## SELECT PLANTS

You don't have to spend hours weaving through the plant aisles to get what you need. Simply select a few flowers with colors and textures you like, and then check the labels for how much sun the plants need, how tall they'll grow and how far apart they should be planted. Look for taller plants to surround your focal point and shorter ones toward the edges of the bed. If you have trouble choosing, pick out just two varieties, one taller, like zinnias or geraniums, and one shorter, like marigolds for sunny spots or coleus and bright impatiens for the shade.

Next, look at the various edgings available - from bricks or landscape timbers to flexible plastic garden edging. The edge separates lawn and flowerbed, so you can mow grass without cutting down plants.

Once you've selected the plants and edging you want, quickly sketch their dimensions on your graph paper to determine how many plants you'll need. To get you started, here's a sample shopping list and the tools you'll need to finish the job.

## SHOPPING LIST

- Small bag of Canadian Sphagnum peat moss.
- Small bag of compost.
- Two to seven medium-tall plants that complement or contrast with your focal point.
- Two to seven shorter plants, all of one type.
- Shredded bark or other mulch.
- Edging to surround flowerbed.

## TOOL CHECKLIST

- Shovel
- Hoe
- Rake

## BEFORE YOU PLANT

Use a garden hose or a length of rope to create an outline for your flowerbed. This lets you see how you like the shape of the bed and provides a digging guide. The next - and most critical step - is to improve the soil.

Start by loosening the ground across the entire bed. Remove the weeds, sod or old plants from the area. Next, spread two to three inches of peat moss, or a 50:50 blend of peat moss and compost, across the bed. Then, dig this into the top six inches of soil. The peat moss helps sandy soil hold moisture, so you won't have to water as



Dig two to three inches of a 50:50 blend of peat moss and compost into a new flowerbed to ensure a healthy soil.

often, and it loosens and improves the drainage in clay or hard packed soil, so air can get to the plant roots. It also makes weeding easier and reduces the amount of fertilizer you'll need.

Once the soil is ready, position the plants according to their planting instructions. Then, complete the bed with a layer of shredded bark or other bagged mulch to give it a more polished look. Water your new bed frequently until the plants take hold and then regularly during the summer to supplement the rainfall in your area. Then, just watch your garden grow and enjoy. No one has to know it took less than a weekend to create.

To order free brochures on "How to with peat moss" and other gardening tips, send a self-addressed, unstamped, business-sized envelope to: Peat Moss, Box 385102, Minneapolis, MN, 55438; E-mail: cspma@peatmoss.com.

The Canadian peat industry is committed to making peat moss a sustainable resource. Only one acre in every 6,000 is harvested and when harvesting stops, the bogs are restored to functioning peatlands. For more information on peat and the environment, visit the Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss Association's Web site at [www.peatmoss.com](http://www.peatmoss.com).

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