

Easy, instant color: this is the beauty and attractiveness of growing annuals. In the strictest definition, an annual is a plant that grows, flowers, sets seed, and dies--all in the same year. The term also has been loosely expanded to include those tender perennials that live over the winter in only the warmest of areas. Either way, annuals grow from seed to flower in a surprisingly short time, producing color all summer long. You can paint it soft or paint it bold, in any range of colors you choose, from frost to frost.

Annuals provide you and your garden with an overflowing oasis of beauty for a modest price. Their rewards are quick, bringing a new look to your landscape in a few weeks. No major investment is required to spruce up the outside of the house. Children in your family? There are few things so satisfying as teaching youngsters the mysteries of nature and watching the delighted grins as their annual seeds pop from the soil, grow, and burst into bloom.

Growing annuals allows you the freedom of changing your mind and your color scheme every growing season. Experiencing the changes and advances in the horticultural world by trying new varieties is as close at hand as a seed packet or flat of seedlings. And nothing is more invigorating than being surrounded by the freshness of flowers in the garden or in the home. Most annuals also boast the virtue of "plant and forget," rarely needing more care than an occasional drink of water. Annuals may be grown from seed, started indoors in late winter, or planted directly into the ground. Or purchase them in flats at a local outlet. No matter what growing conditions you have--hot or cool, sun or shade, wet or dry--there are annual flowers for you to enjoy.