

Gardeners often equate rock gardening with midget evergreens, hardy alpines, and juicy succulents. These aren't the only plants you can use, however, because many annuals also have a place in a rock garden. They are, in fact, an asset to it, for they assure color until frost, well past the usual flush of blooms these slopes display. Annuals are especially valuable to fill in crevices until the permanent plants take hold, to add a spot of color, or to fill bare spots quickly.

The requirements are simple: low growing, creeping, or spreading into a carpet. Sweet alyssum, lobelia, cornflower (or bachelor's-buttons), pansies, linaria, phlox, cuphea, torenia, sweet william, nierembergia, Swan River daisy, portulaca, verbena, ageratum, or ice plant all fit the description. Enliven an old-fashioned dry rock wall with color, using some of these same annuals. Because watering will be a problem, pick the ones known to be drought resistant.

Some annuals (myosotis, stock, dianthus) like full sun and cool soil. This can be a problem in hot areas; ease it by shading the roots with a large rock or a decorative mulch, such as wood chips.