

Annuals Help Show Spring

Splash spring through your yard or garden. Start planning gorgeous perennial and annual beds now, when spring is just around the corner. Many varieties of flowering favorites are easy to plant and require simple care.

If a fantastic landscape of blooming plants isn't quite what you had in mind, why not just plant a cutting garden of French marigolds, cockscomb, fragrant stock and everlasting strawflowers to bring nature's glories indoors for endless family enjoyment?

Don't limit blossoming plants to the yard. Plant them in decorative urns, ceramic or terra cotta pottery, or other types of containers with adequate drainage. Use these novel planters at the home entranceway, on the porch, patio or under windows to highlight unique architecture or drapery details.

Instead of a drab mailbox stuck in the front yard, why not position the mailbox post into a weathered wooden barrel or freshly-painted farm cart? Fill the barrel with an organic soil mixture and surround it with blossoming annuals and perennials to delight the mailman and everyone else who passes by.

Line the driveway, sidewalk or vegetable garden with a border of rainbow-colored plantings. Encircle trees or attractive shrubs with these versatile varieties, or use them in hanging planters.

Professional nurserymen know that adequate fertilization is the key to flowering plants neighbors will envy. After fertilization, the most important ingredient to keep plants covered with showy, healthy

blossoms is proper soil preparation. Before planting, use a spade to loosen soil to a depth of about eight inches. Now is the time to improve soil by adding peat moss, coarse sand, compost or leafmold if the soil appears to be too heavy or compacted. Aeration and drainage are vital to the growth of strong plant root systems.

Mix ordinary garden soil with large amounts of the organic matter plus scoops of continuous feeding fertilizer. Follow package instructions for proper fertilizer amounts. Then set annuals or perennials in place without pushing roots through the fertilizer. Refill the holes with soil, tamp gently, then soak with water. In window boxes and containers, add the suggested amount to the potting mix prior to planting.

Perennials from previous years are even more in need of vital fertilization. These herbaceous beauties like bleeding heart, Oriental poppies, delphinium, red-blossomed penstemon, pure white Shasta daisies and summer phlox require a spring feeding to stay strong and florabundant.

Remember that every two to three years, as perennials outgrow their space, divide the clumps and replant. Use these lovely extras to replace bare spots in the yard with lavish color.

Replanting is less stressful during the fall or early spring, while the plant is dormant. Carefully dig up the rootball with a spade. Separate each one into two or three sections. Use a spading fork to divide day lilies or other strong-rooted perennials.

Check Quality Of Your Grass Seed

To make sure results meet your expectations when you seed a lawn, take time to check the quality of the grass seed before you buy.

Every grass seed package must show an analysis of the seed within. It offers an invaluable guide to quality by explaining the differences between seed sold at \$1 and seed with sells at \$5 for one pound.

The analysis indicates the percentage by weight (required by law) of each item identified by the seed testing company. It does not, however, reveal the volume proportion of each ingredient, which is most important to know to determine how your lawn will eventually look.

Exactly what should you look for on the label? The names of grasses contained in the package will give you an idea of the characteristics of the lawn you're buying. Improved grasses have variety names, like "Victoria" Kentucky bluegrass or "Loretta" perennial ryegrass. The germination percentage indicates how much of the seed content is capable of growth under ideal conditions.

Under the heading "Other Ingredients," you'll find the percentage by weight of undesirable contents. For example, if a high percentage

(more than 0.6 percent) of "Crop Seed" is listed, take heed. "Crop" refers to plants grown for profit or utility. These are usually very difficult to get rid of once they are established in your lawn. Examples of Crop Seed included timothy and orchard grass.

Weeds are something else you can do without in your lawn. You'll find weed seed included under "Other Ingredients"; more than 0.1 percent is too high.

"Noxious Weeds," on the other hand, are considered special problems and may be very difficult to control. They must be named and counted separately per ounce or per pound. Examples include sheep sorrel and nutsedge.

"Inert Matter" is anything not classified as a seed. Levels of 2.5 percent or more are a good indication of poor quality.

To make sure you grow a lawn with the characteristics you want, it's also important to understand seed count. Grasses vary widely in the actual number of seeds per pound. For example, it takes 226,800 ryegrass seeds to make a pound, but Highland bentgrass requires 9,072,000. The difference lies in the size and weight of the two seeds.



Cleaning Up After Children And Pets

W.C. Fields reportedly never trusted a man who liked dogs and children.

Pets and kids, though, present homeowners with endless supplies of dirt and cleanliness challenges.

Some solutions are presented by new technology in household furnishings, such as antimicrobial carpet treatments that permanently resist odor and stain-causing bacteria. This and other tips can help save you from following after cats, dogs and kids with a broom and mop every minute of the day.

GIVE PETS A HAND

Most cats and dogs can be hosebroken, but accidents will occur. You can help them and yourself with these suggestions during housebreaking and afterward.

- A few drops of a dog-attracting solution (available in pet stores) on newspaper or outdoors clues your pet to use these designated areas.

- Young dogs like to chew on anything in sight when they are teething. Provide them with rawhide bones to prevent damage to furniture.

- Cats' instincts tell them to scratch to keep their claws sharp. A scratching post will prevent claw marks and shredded furniture.

CLEANING UP AFTER CHILDREN

Children's habits can make housekeeping real work. Ease your cleaning chores with these suggestions:

- Give children their own play area, one with easy-care tile floors and washable walls.

- Put a toy receptacle in every room. An attractive basket blends nicely with any decor.

- Let children know that certain toys are to be used in particular rooms. Untidy toys such as blocks can be kept in rooms that aren't always on display.

- Discourage snacking outside kitchen and dining areas. Food can be easily smeared and ground into furniture and carpeting.

A little common sense and some help from modern technology can help you survive and enjoy your pets and children. Take advantage of easy-care finishes on walls, furniture and carpeting to keep your home presentable at all times.

Shrubs Bring Beauty To Your Garden Area

Think of the most tranquil, beautiful landscaped area you know of, and most likely the unsung hero will be woody and flowering shrubs.

These hard-working and easy-to-care-for foliage plants may be just what you are looking for in your landscape planning and planting.

Informal hedges, elaborately designed borders, privacy screens and sound barriers or luxurious masks for unsightly fixtures are all tasks that shrubs perform beautifully.



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