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Annuals for Utah Gardens

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ANNUALS FOR UTAH GARDENS

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Annuals are plants that come up in the spring, reach maturity, flower, set seeds, then die all in one season. They provide eye-catching color to any flower bed and can be used as borders, fillers, or background plantings. There are several ways to find annual species that fit your landscape needs; referring to the All-American Selection program evaluations (http://www.all-americaselections.org), visiting botanical gardens to observe examples of annuals in the landscape, and looking through commercial seed catalogs are excellent places to find ideas.

Most annuals are available in cell packs, flats, or individual pots. When buying plants, choose those that are well established but not pot bound. Tall spindly plants lack vigor and should be avoided. Instead look for plants with dark green foliage that are compact and free of insect and disease problems. These criteria are much more important than the flower number when choosing a plant. An abundance of foliage with few, if any flowers, is desirable.

BED PREPARATION

Avoid cultivating soil too early in the spring and during conditions that are too wet. Soil conditions can be determined by feeling the soil. If the soil forms a ball in your hand but crumbles easily, it is ideal. Cultivate the flower bed to a depth of 6-10 inches by turning the soil with a spade. Utah soils can always use extra organic matter such as grass clippings, leaves, compost, manure, peat, etc. About 1 inch of compost can be added and tilled into the bed. Fertilizer should be applied based on soil test results. However, if you choose not to test the soil, add a complete fertilizer that is higher in nitrogen at a rate of 1 to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1000 square feet of cultivated area or add a complete slow-release fertilizer based on the label directions. Fertilizers should be incorporated into the top 4-6 inches of soil.

TRANSPLANTING

Annuals prefer warm soil and should not be planted until the threat of frost has past. Planting dates will vary throughout the state.

Refer to the freeze-free dates (Table 1) or talk to your local county Extension agent about planting dates for your area. It is best to transplant in early morning or evening when temperatures are cooler and transplant shock is minimized. If the plants in the cell packs or pots are extremely root bound, gently loosen the roots on the sides of the root ball. Make sure the root ball of the plant is moist when planting to reduce wilting. Position the plant in the bed at the same depth as it was in the original pot. Plants placed too deep in the soil can encourage disease problems and those planted too high may fall over. Keep soil around the plants moist for about a week after transplanting or until the root system establishes and new top growth is observed. Mulch between plants to reduce potential weed problems and to conserve moisture by limiting water evaporation from the soil.

WATERING

Once established, allow the soil surface to dry slightly between irrigations. Irrigate until the soil is thoroughly moistened to 6 inches below the surface. This stimulates deeper root growth. Annual beds require less irrigation than turf and should be watered separately. Irrigation systems that reduce water accumulation on the foliage and flowers are recommended.

Table 1. Average last spring and first fall freeze days.

Location	Avg. last spring freeze	Avg. first fall freeze	Avg. freeze free days
Beaver	June 4	Sept 16	104
Blanding	May14	Oct 11	149
Castle Dale	May 22	Sept 23	124
Cedar City	May 19	Oct 2	135
Coalville	June 15	Sept 2	78
Corinne	May 13	Sept 29	139
Delta	May 16	Sept 28	135
Farmington	May 5	Oct 10	158
Heber	June 8	Sept 7	90
Kanab	May 4	Oct 23	171
Logan	May 25	Sept 25	158
Manti	May 22	Sept 27	127
Moab	April 18	Oct 16	181
Nephi	May 15	Oct 1	138
Ogden	May 5	Oct 10	157
Panguitch	June 20	Sept 2	74
Pleasant Grove	May 11	Oct 9	151
Richfield	May 26	Sept 19	116
Roosevelt	May 15	Sept 27	134
St. George	March 29	Nov 1	216
Salt Lake City	April 26	Oct 16	172
Tooele	May 3	Oct 15	164
Vernal	May 27	Sept 20	116

SUGGESTED DROUGHT TOLERANT ANNUALS FOR UTAH

Ageratum (*Ageratum houstonianum)*
Blanket Flower (*Gaillardia pulchella)*
Cockscomb (*Celosia cristata)*
Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus* and *C. sulphureus)*
Dusty Miller (*Senecio cineraria)*
Flowering Tobacco (*Nicotiana alata)*
Four o'clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa)*
Gazania (*Gazania splendens)*
Globe amaranth (*Gomphrena globosa)*
Lantana (*Lantana camara* and *L. montevidemis)*
Vinca (*Catharanthus roseus)*
Rose Moss (*Portulaca grandiflora)*
Marigold (*Tagetes erecta* and *T. patula)*
Mexican sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia)*
Salvia (*Salvia splendens* and *S. farinacea)*
Statice (*Limonium* species)
Strawflower (*Helichrysum bracteatum)*
Spider Plant (*Cleome hasslerana)*
Sunflower (*Helianthus annuus)*
Sweet alyssum (*Lobularia maritime)*
Verbena (*Verbena* species)
Zinnia (*Zinnia angustifolia, Z. elegans, and Z. linearis)*

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