



Horticulture



BEDDING PLANTS FOR SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Lee 5/99A

Stephen H. Brown
Lee County Horticulture Agent

Bedding plants are used to add a splash of color to an entranceway, walkway, porch, deck or patio. They can provide high impact color when used as mass plantings in raised or ground beds. Bedding plants can also be grown in or out of containers and fit into almost any landscape design.

Classification

Bedding plants can be classified as either annuals, biennials or perennials. Annuals are most frequently used as bedding plants. Annuals are plants which germinate, flower, seed and die all within one growing season. In Southwest Florida there are two distinct seasons for annuals; a warm season lasting from May through October, and a cool season from November through May. The growth of a particular annual is usually confined to one of these two seasons. When grown outside their season, most annuals do poorly and are usually removed from the garden because of natural decline. There are, however, a few annuals that can tolerate both warm and cool seasons.

Biennial bedding plants complete their life span within two years. Perennial bedding plants last for three years or longer. Some biennials and perennials, while not as seasonally dependent as annuals, may not be adapted for sustained growth in Southwest Florida. This is because of our intense disease, insect and solar pressures.

When to Plant

Annuals that grow well in the cool season should be planted in the fall, winter, or early spring. Annuals that can tolerate high

temperatures and humidity should be planted in late spring or early summer. Some bedding plants such as coleus, wax begonias and salvias may be planted year-round.

Where to Plant

All bedding plants should be planted so that they receive the correct sun and irrigation exposures. In the summer in Southwest Florida, almost all bedding plants recommended for full sun will often do better when grown under light afternoon shade.

Fertilization

Garden soils, especially in recently developed areas, are frequently infertile. Flower beds should be fertilized prior to planting or at planting time and on a monthly basis. Apply 6-6-6 or a similar complete fertilizer at the rate of 2 pounds per 100 square feet of bed area. Controlled release fertilizers are ideal for Florida's sandy soils. Plants usually grow much better with a continuous nutrient supply such as from controlled release fertilizers. Controlled release fertilizers can be incorporated uniformly throughout the soil before planting or applied to the soil surface in established plantings.

Special thanks to those who reviewed the manuscript for horticultural accuracy and presentation. Barbara Presnell, Lee County Extension Horticultural Specialist. Michelle Bell, Extension Floriculture Specialist, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center. Master Gardeners; Rosemary Fleming, Julia Leigh, Sonja Smith, and Barbara Weems. Master Gardener Trainees; Linda Ballou and Bob Emmert. Kip Bryant, Plantworks, Inc.

The Extension Service is part of a publicly funded statewide educational network that provides information and scientific knowledge to area residents, businesses and government leaders. The University of Florida, Extension Service offers the latest research and technology in more than 200 subjects related to horticulture, energy/conservation, agriculture, youth development and family and consumer sciences. Last year, the Lee County Extension Service provided assistance to more than 70,000 people and provided 463 classes and workshops on everything from family financial planning to pesticide training.

The Lee County Extension Service is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer that provides research, educational information and other services without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin.

Table 1. Bedding plants for year-round growth for Southwest Florida

| Name | Exposure • - Sun ? -Partial Shade | Cold Tolerance | Planting Date | Removal Date | Comment |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Amaranthus | • | Tender* | Summer | At first frost or when undesired. | Seeds easily. |
| Artemisia^P | • | Hardy** | All year | Lasts up to 2 years. | Stem cutting. Roots well in damp potting soil. |
| Begonia - wax^P | ? | Tender | November - March | May | Best in containers. |
| Begonia - tuberous^P | ? | Tender | October - January | When desired. | Best in containers. |
| Blue daze^P | • ? | Tender | All year | | Keep foliage dry. Flowering reduced in partial shade. |
| Caladium^P | ? | Hardy | Spring | Divide tubers every 3-4 years. | Dormant in winter. Best in rich, moist soil. |
| Canna^P | • | Hardy | All year | | Leaf roller caterpillars. |
| Coleus | ? | Tender | February - September | When desired. | Remove flowers to extend life. |
| Geranium^P | • ? | Tender | October - March | When desired. Will last several years in light shade. | Best in containers. Remove old flowers for continuous bloom. |
| Gerbera daisy^P | • ? | Hardy | All year | When desired. | Susceptible to crown rot. |
| Kalanchoe^P | • | Hardy | All year | When desired. | Drought tolerant. |
| Marigold | • | Hardy | February - December | 3-4 months after planting. | Remove old flowers for continuous bloom. |
| Mexican petunia^P | • ? | Hardy | All year | When desired. | |
| Lantana^P | • | Hardy | All year | When desired. Lasts up to 3 years. | Spider mites, whiteflies, leaf miners. Leaves damaged by light frost. |
| Pentas^P | • | Tender | All Year | When diseased. Lasts up to 3 years. | May need support as matures. |
| Shrimp plant | • ? | Hardy | All year | | Can tolerate temperatures to 20° F. |
| Thunbergia alata^P | • ? | Tender | February - April | First frost. | Requires ample water. |
| Vinca (Periwinkle) | • | Tender | All Year | When desired. | Seeds easily. |
| Zinnia | • | Tender | February - March August - September | When diseased. | Powdery mildew in cool months. Remove old flowers to extend life. |

^P - Perennials. Annuals, where not indicated.

* - Tender plants are killed or severely damaged by light frost.

** - Hardy plants will withstand light frost.

Table 2. Warm season annual bedding plants for Southwest Florida

| Name | Exposure • - Sun ? - Partial Shade | Cold Tolerance | Planting Date | Removal Date | Comment |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Balsam | • ? | Tender* | February - September | June - July | Powdery mildew. Nematode. |
| Celosia | • ? | Tender | February - September | When set seed. | Nematode. |
| Crossandra | • ? | Tender | March - August | November | Prefers moist soil. |
| Dahlberg daisy | • | Tender | March-August | | Heat and drought tolerant. |
| Exacum (Persian violet) | ? | Tender | February - October | When overgrown. | Best in containers. |
| Gaillardia (Blanket flower) | • | Tender | February - May | August | Seeds easily; volunteers begin flowering in April. |
| Ornamental pepper | • | Tender | March - August | November | Very heat tolerant. |
| Portulaca (Moss rose) | • | Tender | March - August | At first frost. | Drought tolerant. Well-drained soil a must. |
| Purslane | • | Tender | March-August | November | Drought tolerant. Will reseed. |
| Rudbeckia | • ? | Hardy** | February - March | July | |
| Salvia | • ? | Tender | February - December | When deteriorated. | Drought tolerant but requires ample water for rapid growth. |
| Cleome (Spider flower) | • | Tender | March-August | When deteriorated. | Excellent background plant. |
| Torenia (Summer pansy) | • ? | Tender | February - October | When leaf yellows. | |

* - Tender plants are killed or severely damaged by light frost.

** - Hardy plants will withstand light frost.

Table 3. Cool season annual bedding plants for Southwest Florida

| Name | Exposure • - Sun ? - Partial Shade | Cold Tolerance | Planting Date | Removal Date | Comment |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Ageratum | • ? | Tender* | February - March | June | Keep soil evenly moist. Whiteflies. |
| Alyssum | • | Tender | October - March | March - June | Fragrant. |
| Aster | • ? | Tender | October - February | June | |
| Baby's breath | • | Hardy** | August - December | April | Nematode. |
| Calendula (Pot marigold) | • | Hardy | January - March | May | Nematode. |
| Carnation | • | Hardy | October - January | April | |
| Cosmos | • | Tender | November - February | June | Does best in dry soil. |
| Dahlia | ? | Tender | November - February | June | Mildew. |
| Dianthus | • | Hardy | October - February | June | Does well in dry soil. |
| Dusty miller | • | Hardy | October - March | August | |
| Impatiens | ? | Tender | September - March | At first frost or by May. | Requires ample water. |
| Marguerite daisy | • | Hardy | October - February | June | Nematode. |
| Pansy & Viola | • | Hardy | October - January | April | Pinch to encourage bushy growth. |
| Petunia | • | Hardy | October - February | May | |
| Phlox | • | Hardy | November-February | July | Nematode. Remove spent flowers. |
| Snapdragon | • ? | Hardy | November - February | April - May | |
| Statice | • | Hardy | September - January | May | Nematode. |
| Strawflower | • | Tender | November - February | June | |
| Streptocarpus | ? | Tender | February - March | May | |
| Sweet William | • | Hardy | February - March | May | |
| Verbena | • | Hardy | February - April September - November | When undesired. | May survive summer. Drought tolerant. |

* - Tender plants are killed or severely damaged by light frost.

** - Hardy plants will withstand light frost.