

Pansies



Pansies bring a beautiful palette of color to the landscape. They are one of the longest lasting, most versatile annuals you can plant in the garden when other annuals are waning. Winter hearty pansies add color and beauty to your garden, even during cool weather. Pansies have no difficulty surviving winters in Zone 6. By planting in the fall, you may enjoy your pansies for three seasons.

When to Plant

Fall Planting: Your Milmont grown pansies will be in bloom, or close to bloom, when you plant them. They will continue to bloom through the mild days of autumn, stopping only when we begin to have hard freezes going into the winter months. During the winter, if we have several weeks of mild weather, they may begin to rebloom. At the first hint of spring, your pansies, which by now have become very well established, will burst into bloom. They will continue to grow and flower, making a spectacular display in your garden through spring until summer, when the heat causes the plants to become straggly and the flowers to become smaller and less colorful. At that time, it is best to remove the plants and replace them with warm-season annuals to ensure a summer of color in your garden.

Spring Planting: Pansies may also be successfully planted in the late winter or spring, particularly if you start with larger plants to ensure instant color. Tuck them into the garden for quick pockets of color, or into containers on the deck. Line them out in drifts, or tuck them in among spring flowering bulbs.

Where to Plant

Pansies grow best in full sun, although they will tolerate a little light shade, especially in the warmer months. They do well in ordinary garden soil, but will thrive if given a little extra care as outlined below. Pansies do especially well in containers. Plant them into window boxes or hay racks, patio or deck planters, or strawberry jars. If you use frost-proof containers, water them as needed, and give them some shelter in the winter, your pansies should come through the season with flying colors.

Planting and Feeding

In containers: use a good commercial potting soil such as Schultz® Professional Potting Soil. Replace the soil each year, and add the old soil to your garden.

In the ground: spade or till the bed to a depth of 8 inches, incorporating a couple of inches of peat moss or compost. Once every two or three years, have the soil tested to see if it is necessary to add lime or other nutrients. If you have not tested, also incorporate a good organic fertilizer such as Electra or Plant Tone following label instructions. In the spring, to maintain vigorous blooming, feed with a water-



soluble fertilizer such as Miracle Gro® about every two weeks, following label instructions. Pansies should be spaced 7 to 9 inches apart (from center to center). Take the pansy out of the pot or cell pack, and break up the root ball a bit to encourage rooting. Plant so that the top of the root ball is slightly above soil grade, as it will settle a bit when watered. Water it thoroughly, and mulch with an inch of hardwood shredded bark mulch or pine bark mulch. If not mulched, cultivate around the plants periodically to keep the soil loose and control weeds.

Winter Protection

For fall planted pansies, some additional care will give you a better chance of winter bloom. In addition to the mulch applied at planting, when the weather gets cold, cover the pansies lightly with an airy material such as straw or evergreen boughs. This will protect the plants from wind or harsh weather. Old Christmas trees are a good source of evergreen boughs in January. Do not use leaves, which will mat down when wet—good air circulation is essential for pansies.

Troubleshooting

Pansies are generally trouble free. If they are bothered by insects such as aphids or spider mites, apply a low-toxicity spray such as Ultrafine horticultural oil. Chemical sprays may damage open flowers. Pansies are occasionally infected by a soil-borne fungal disease (Thielaviopsis root rot) which causes yellowing and wilt. This tends to be a problem in soils which do not drain well. There is no effective chemical cure, and the best way to avoid a recurrence is to plant your pansies in a different location the following year.