



Growing Annuals, Biennials and Perennials

Flowering Plant Life Cycles

Botanists recognize three categories of flowering plants based on their life cycles: annuals, biennials, and perennials.

Annuals

Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle in one growing season. They generally are abundant flower producers. Common examples are petunias, marigolds, and zinnias.

Biennials

Biennials complete their life cycles in two growing seasons. Normally blooming in spring, the seeds that follow germinate immediately producing plants that are capable of overwintering until the following spring. After flowering, the plant will die. Examples are forget-me-nots, foxglove, and hollyhocks.

Perennials

Perennial plants live for three or more years. This category is further subdivided into two groups: the woody trees and shrubs, and the herbaceous perennials. In temperate zones, the leaves and stems of herbaceous perennials die back to the crown (junction between stem and root) each winter. Examples are irises, oriental poppies, phlox, and mums.

Gardening Interests

C A R E S H E E T

Planning

Most flower borders look best when plants of the same kind are repeated in groups. Tall plants should be placed in the back, or, if you are dealing with an island bed, in the center. Plants of intermediate heights come next. Edging plants should be the shortest, usually set in at least six inches from grass to allow for mowing. A more pleasing effect is achieved if groups of edging plants are all of the same kind.

Sun vs. Shade

Flowering plants exist for both sunny and shady situations. If your garden receives only partial sun, the following rules generally apply: 1) If you have morning sun and afternoon shade, select shady plants; 2) If you have morning shade and afternoon sun, pick plants that grow best in sun. Southern exposures are the sunniest and warmest followed by western, eastern, and northern exposures.

Planting & Feeding

Flowers thrive best in a soil that is well drained and rich in organic matter. Add materials such as peat moss and compost to improve your soil prior to planting. To enhance soil fertility add Espoma Plant-tone to the soil at a rate of 4 lbs. for each one hundred square feet and blend into the top four inches of soil. Plant-tone's 100% natural organic formula stimulates root and foliage growth while it supplies the plant with all of the major, minor, and trace nutrients required. In established perennial beds, broadcast Plant-tone at the rate of 4 lbs. / hundred square feet.

Once plants become established and are actively growing, apply Espoma Flower-tone at a rate of 5 lbs. / hundred square feet. Flower-tone's formula is lower in nitrogen and higher in phosphorous and potassium to promote abundant, long lasting blooms. Repeat Flower-tone applications once each month throughout the growing season. Water thoroughly after each feeding.

Watering

It is better to water deeply and thoroughly over the course of a day rather than one hour a day every day for 14 days. Overwatering soil can prevent oxygen from getting to roots. Shallow watering encourages the growth of surface roots which will be killed off during periods of drought. Deep watering fosters the growth of roots down into the soil which protects plants from periods of water deprivation.



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