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Annual Container Planting Guide & Tips

This is a guide to help you maximize your success in planting your annual containers. Things to think about are your Container, Plant Selection, Planting, and Care.

Container considerations are if the container has the proper drainage, if it is a stationary container or if it is moveable, and how many plants the container will hold.

- Most plants do not like to sit in water and need to drain properly to avoid getting water logged which can cause roots to rot. If your container has minimal drainage holes you may want to consider adding some holes. It is especially important to have good drainage in a container that will be stationary since it won't be getting moved when inclement weather should occur.
- If the container you are planting in is stationary and can not be moved when weather is inclement, then your plant choices may be different than if you could move the container under cover. For example, at Wolf Hill Garden Center when heavy rain is predicted we move containers that consist of petunias under cover so that the blooms don't get decimated by the rain.
- The size of your container will determine how many plants can be included in the arrangement as well as how vigorous the plant varieties you choose are. A 10-12 inch container will hold 3 to 4 plants, 14 - 16 inch container will hold 4 - 6 plants, 16 - 20 inch container can hold 8 plants. Keep in mind that the more plants that are in the container, the faster it will dry out and need more frequent watering as well as feeding.

Plant Selection considerations are Light tolerance, Drought tolerance, Compatibility and Design.

- Light Tolerance considerations is where your container will be placed. This will determine which plants will be optimal based on how much sun light they will be exposed to. Full Sun conditions is when the container will receive 6+ hours of sunlight in a day (keep in mind that afternoon sun is much stronger than morning sun). Part Sun is 3 - 6 hours a day, Shade is less than 3 hours direct sun per day.
- Drought Tolerance is the ability of a plant to withstand drier conditions, choosing plants with this characteristic can be beneficial if watering regularly is an issue but keep in mind that all plants need water and will not survive without getting watered on a regular basis. Choosing plants for a container that have similar environmental requirements is important so that they will all thrive together in the same container. Plants will do better in containers when they have healthy root systems by watering deeply less often vs. sparingly but often.
- Compatibility of the plants chosen for a container is important, same as with Light tolerance and drought tolerance. Plants chosen with similar growth habits and vigor so that one plant doesn't over take the other plants is important. The plant tags may help in determining how vigorous a plant is by the suggested spacing of a plant. In a container planting the recommended spacing is difficult to adhere to, but it will give an indication as to how large the plant will get in comparison to the other plants it is being paired with.
- Designing how to put together your container will help you choose your plants. One common way to help in your design and therefore selection of plants is using the Thriller, Filler, Spiller concept. Thrillers are plants with height and can add vertical interest to your container. Filler plants are usually shorter than the Thriller and planted around or in front of your vertical element to fill the space. Spillers are placed close to the edge of your container so that they can flow nicely, 'spill' over the lip. You should place your 'spillers' evenly around the outside of the planting for an arrangement that will be viewed from all sides or just in the front for containers that will be placed against something and only viewed from the front.

Planting your container involves choices as well, the success and longevity of your container planting will be determined by what goes into it. Choosing the proper soil and nutrition will make a difference. Since you have multiple plants in a contained space, the plants will exhaust the nutrition in the soil more quickly than if planted in the ground with more space.

- A good potting soil which is light and fluffy that will retain moisture, nutrients and air for the roots is important in container planting.
- Using a starter fertilizer will help build a strong and healthy root system. A particular product that we have seen used with great success is an Espoma product called Bio-tone. Not only does starter fertilizer promote a larger root mass it also reduces transplant loss and promotes bigger blooms. When planting your container, use a small scoop of starter fertilizer in each plant hole mixed with the potting soil, this will give your container a good healthy start (follow product guidelines for amount to use).

- Feeding will help your containers maintain a lush and vigorous appearance. Slow release fertilizer can be sprinkled in and around plants to provide continuous nutrition. Water soluble fertilizer can then be used in place of watering every couple weeks for an additional boost of nutrition.
- Headspace is one more thing you should be mindful of. The headspace is the space between top of the soil and rim of the pot which will determine the amount of water your container will get at watering time to properly saturate your soil. A half inch is the general guide line for this, if it is too deep you risk over watering your plant, too shallow and water may run off and the container will not get proper saturation.

Caring for your containers once they are planted and established will help to keep them fresh. Keeping a regular watering schedule is obvious, but just as important is to not over water. Some plants prefer drier conditions and others moist, with the proper plant pairings all the plants in your container will thrive under the same conditions. Knowing the plant requirements will help in determine how to care for your plants, for instance a plant that prefers drier conditions should not be watered if the soil is moist. Conversely, some plants will not tolerate their soil to dry out completely. Care also includes trimming, deadheading and removing any dead vegetation to cut down on plant disease and harbor places for pests to hide.

Please refer to the wolffhillgardencenter.com Plant Guide menu item, this is a tool that you can use to look up each of the plants in your container and investigate their planting and growing needs.

The following two lists can be used for planning your container planting. The first is Annuals for Sun and the second is Annuals for partial sun to shade. The Annuals in the second list that are noted with an * are the more shade loving plants that won't tolerate more than 3 hours of sun per day. The second column is average height and last three columns indicate the common use of a plant in a container T - Thriller, F - Filler, and S - Spiller.

Annuals for full Sun:

Annuals for Shade or part Sun:

	Approx. Height.	T	F	S		Approx. Height.	T	F	S
Abutilon - Flowering Maple	2 - 6'	X			Abutilon - Flowering Maple	2' - 6'	X		
Acalypha - Chenille Plant	15"			X	Abutilon	2 - 6	X		
Ageratum	6 - 30"	X	X		Acalypha - Chenille Plant	15"			X
Alternanthera	6 - 16"		X	X	Adiantum - Maidenhair Fern	24"		X	X
Anagallis	12"			X	Ageratum	6" - 30"	X	X	
Angelonia	12 - 30"				Alternanthera	6" - 16"		X	X
Antirrhinum - Snadragon	8 - 24"	X	X		Anagallis	12"			X
Argyranthemum - Marguerites	12 - 20"	X	X		Asparagus Fern *	12 - 30"		X	X
Biden	12 - 14"			X	Begonia *	8 - 24"		X	X
Brachyscome	6 - 16"			X	Browallia *	12"			X
Brassica - Ornamental Cabbage	6 - 18"		X		Caladium *	12 - 26"		X	
Brassica - Kale	18"		X		Calendula	12"		X	
Calendula	12"		X		Calibrachoa - Million Bells	10"			X
Calibrachoa - Million Bells	10"			X	Catharanthus - Vinca	8 - 16"		X	X
Canna	18" - 5'	X			Croton	10" - 3'	X	X	
Catharanthus - Vinca	8 - 16"		X	X	Colocasia - Elephant Ear	2 - 4'	X		
Celosia	12 - 20"	X	X		Cordyline	3'	X		
Cleome	18" - 4'	X			Cyperus - Papyrus / Umbrella Grass	2 - 4'	X		
Croton	10" - 3'	X	X		Diascia	8"			X

Colocasia - Elephant Ear	2 - 4'	X			Dichondra	3"			X
Cordyline	3'	X			Euphorbia	12 - 24"		X	X
Cosmos	12" - 4'	X			Fuchsia *	14 - 24"	X	X	
Cuphea	12 - 24"	X	X	X	Gerbera	8 - 18"		X	
Cyperus - Papyrus/Umbrella Grass	2 - 4'	X			Helichrysum - Licorice plant	18"			X
Dahlia	8" - 4'	X	X		Heliotrope	8 - 26"	X	X	
Dianthus	6 - 24"		X		Hypoestes - Polkadot plant	18"		X	
Diascia	8"			X	Impatiens - New Guinea Impatiens *	8 - 16"		X	
Dichondra	3"			X	Impatiens (small flower) *	8 - 15"		X	X
Dorotheanthus - Mezzo	6"			X	Ipomoea - Sweet Potato Vine	30"			X
Euphorbia	12 - 24"		X	X	Iresine - Blood Leaf	16"	X	X	
Evolvulus	6 - 18"			X	Isotoma - Laurentia	10"		X	X
Felicia Blue daisy	12 - 24"	X	X		Kalanchoe	8"		X	
Gazania	8"		X		Lobelia	6 - 12"			X
Gerbera	8 - 18"		X		Lobularia - Alyssum	6 - 10"			X
Gomphrena	14 - 24"	X			Lophospermum - Lofos	10 - 24"			X
Helianthus - Sunflowers	14 - 4"	X			Lotus Vine	6 - 24"			X
Helichrysum - Licorice plant	18"			X	Mandevilla	10'	X		
Heliotrope	8 - 26"	X	X		Nemesia	12"			X
Hypoestes - Polkadot plant	18"		X		Nicotiana	12-20"	X	X	
Impatiens - SunPatiens	18 - 30"				Nigella	24"	X	X	
Ipomoea - Morning Glory	10 - 20'	X			Oxalis - Shamrock	6 - 16"		X	X
Ipomoea - Sweet Potato Vine	30"			X	Pelargonium - Geranium	12 - 20"	X	X	
Isotoma - Laurentia	10"		X	X	Pentas	12 - 24"		X	
Kalanchoe	8"		X		Pericallis - Sinetti	10 - 24"		X	
Lantana	10 - 24"			X	Petunia	12 - 24"		X	X
Lobelia	6 - 12"			X	Phlox	12"		X	
Lobularia - Alyssum	6 - 10"			X	Pilea - Aluminum Plant *	12"		X	X
Lophospermum - Lofos	10 - 24"			X	Plectranthus - Swedish Ivy	8 - 30"			X
Lotus Vine	6 - 24"			X	Plumbago	30"	X		
Mandevilla	10'	X			Salpiglossis	14"		X	
Mecardonia	5"			X	Salvia	8 - 30"	X		
Nemesia	12"			X	Scenecio - Angel Wings	14"		X	
Nicotiana	12-20"	X	X		Scenecio - Blue Chalk Sticks	12"		X	
Nigella	24"	X	X		Solenostemon - Coleus *	8 - 30"	X	X	

Osteopermum - African Daisy	10 - 18"	X	X		Strobilanthes - Persian Shield	18 - 30"	X		
Oxalis - Shamrock	6 - 16"		X	X	Tagetes - Marigold	10 - 18"		X	
Pelargonium - Geranium	12 - 20"	X	X		Thunbergia	9'			X
Pennisetum - Millet	24" - 3'	X			Torenia *	6 - 12"			X
Pennisetum - Fountain Grass	18 - 48"	X			Tradescantia - Wandering Jew *	14"			X
Pentas	12 - 24"		X						
Pericallis - Sinetti	10 - 24"		X		Abutilon - Flowering Maple	2' - 6'	X		
Perilla	24"	X	X		Abutilon	2 - 6	X		
Petunia	12 - 24"		X	X	Acalypha - Chenille Plant	15"			X
Phlox	12"		X		Adiantum - Maidenhair Fern	24"		X	X
Plectranthus - Swedish Ivy	8 - 30"			X	Ageratum	6" - 30"	X	X	
Plumbago	30"	X			Alternanthera	6" - 16"		X	X
Portulaca	6"			X	Anagallis	12"			X
Salpiglossis	14"		X		Asparagus Fern *	12 - 30"		X	X
Salvia	8 - 30"	X							
Sanvitalia - Creeping Zinnia	8"			X					
Scaevola	12"			X					
Scenecio - Angel Wings	14"		X						
Scenecio - Blue Chalk Sticks	12"		X						
Solanum - Potato Vine	5 - 20'			X					
Solenostemon - Coleus Colorblaze	8 - 30"	X	X						
Strobilanthes - Persian Shield	18 - 30"	X							
Sutera - Bacopa	6"			X					
Tagetes - Marigold	10 - 18"		X						
Talinum	14 - 20"	X							
Thunbergia	9'			X					
Tropaeolum - Nasturtium	12"		X	X					
Verbena	8 - 14"			X					
Verbena Bonariensis	24"	X							
Viola - Pansy	8"		X	X					
Zinnia	12" - 4'	X							