Winter Annuals for Fall Color

October is the time to plant your winter annuals for some zest within the landscape. Follow these simple guidelines from the UF/IFAS Sumter County Extension horticulturalists to ensure a bountiful bouquet of color for fall and winter.

What Are Winter Annuals?
Winter annuals are those plants that grow and flower during the cooler months when most landscape plants are dormant.

Popular Winter Annuals

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<th>Plant</th>
<th>Plant Period</th>
<th>Remove Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Snapdragons</td>
<td>October - February</td>
<td>May</td>
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<tr>
<td>Petunia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pansy/Viola</td>
<td>October - February</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calendula</td>
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<td>Foxglove</td>
<td>September - December</td>
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<td>Alyssum</td>
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<td>Carnation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ornamental Kale</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dianthus</td>
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<td>July</td>
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</table>
Amend Your Annual Bed

Amending planting beds with compost is essential for annuals to look their best. Before planting, till or spade the soil at least 6" deep. Add several inches of a high-quality compost or other organic matter to the soil. Mix thoroughly. Compost will break down slowly in time, improving your soil quality and health. The continuous supply of nutrients provided by compost is exactly what annuals need in order to thrive and look their best.

Avoid Deep Planting

One of the most common mistakes people make is to plant their plants too deep. Planting too deep results in roots not getting enough oxygen. This can cause root rot, stunting and decline.

Planting Steps

(1) Dig a hole 1 1/2 to 3 times the width of the root ball.

(2) The root ball should be planted slightly higher than soil level.

(3) Mulch to about 2-3 inches.

(4) Water until established

Growing Tips

- Fertilize with a slow-release fertilizer once plants get established.
- Deadhead flower heads for extended blooming.
- Scout weekly for early signs of pest insects.
- Water early in the morning to avoid diseases.
- Hand pull any weeds growing around annuals.

Compost can be bought locally or homeowners can make their own. Compost bins come in many shapes and sizes and are a great way to recycle materials such as grass clippings, leaves and vegetable or kitchen scraps.

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