

**ANNUALS & BEDDING PLANTS
ARE COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET...
SO DRESS UP YOUR SUMMER GARDEN!
By Bonita Friedland**

A lush and glorious SPRING can thrust us into planting in the garden sooner than wisdom might dictate, and a lot of us feel the pull of strolling through nurseries in wild abandon. So many colorful goodies to relieve us of that blandness in our landscape! Flats of annuals and bedding plants that surely pack a punch! But, before we rush out to Pasquesi's or Chalet or Leider or Mini Earth, let us consider several caveats:

- It can be way too early to plant them into the ground. Temperatures are not stable before the last week of May! Do you have a place where you can nurture these flats and still keep them gorgeous for several weeks?
- Have you thought about a plan that considers color impact? Placement? The two major impact areas to consider are the PERENNIAL GARDEN and the FORMAL BED.

We can think of the PERENNIAL GARDEN as a stunningly expensive dress, and the annuals as the pearls and earrings and handbag and shoes! CLUMPS of continuous color here and there, all summer long, are undoubtedly paramount to the look and feel of the garden environment, and the COLORS we choose can actually make a big difference.

CLUMPS of annuals can be strategically placed around the stalwart perennials. (Hopefully you planned your garden that way, with spaces for the yearly additions!) Clumps should be just one color, and planted closer together to create the clump of color effect.

WARM COLORS (yellow, gold, orange, red, hot pink) will liven up the area and make a dramatic effect. The warms make the flowers look CLOSER than they really are: warm colors planted at the front of the garden bed will make the garden look longer—especially if you place the COOL COLORS (blue, lavender, pastel pink) in the back! Cool colors create a peaceful calm, and give the bed a deeper look in the background.

The FORMAL BED, which is entirely devoted to annual bedding plants, can be looked upon as the “jewelry collection” of the summer garden—expensive and dazzling! (Imagine any shape you choose: square, circle, oval, monogram, emoji!) We can absolutely go out of our minds planning color and pattern schemes! And, the excitement of changing the color scheme each year makes it a new work of art for your landscape! Choose an impactful location where people will stop and “Ahhhhhhh!” Draw it on paper, make copies, and then with colored pencils, you can try different color schemes. Measure the area to get an approx. idea of how many flats you will need. Always take into account the projected maturity height of each different plant.

The bedding scheme usually includes a row of EDGE PLANTS (dwarf up to 8 inches), then several rows of GROUNDWORK PLANTS (8 inches to 2 feet) and then the CENTER SPECIMEN (tall plants with showy leaves or flowers, a birdbath, gazing ball or an urn.)

- **EDGE PLANTS:** Dwarf versions of VERBENA, NASTURTIUM, PHLOX, DUSTY MILLER, IMPATIENS, ALYSSUM, PANSY, LOBELIA, AGERATUM AND FIBROUS BEGONIA.
- **GROUNDWORK PLANTS:** PETUNIA, SALVIA, MARIGOLD, LARKSPUR, ASTER, ZINNIA AND PENSTEMMON.
- **CENTER SPECIMEN PLANTS:** CANNA, GENTIAN SAGE SALVIA, STANDARD PELARGONIUM (GERANIUM) TALL SNAPDRAGON, AMARANTHUS, STANDARD HIBISCUS.

Choose flats containing compact plants with bright green leaves, not a lot of blooms, but a lot of buds. Avoid plants with roots growing through the bottom, or “root bound.” High bushy plants may look good in the flat, but will not look good when you separate and plant them! Keep them out of direct sunlight but in a bright location until planting day.

IDEAL PLANTING DAY: Cloudy, cool and downcast! If hot days are the norm, then plant in late afternoon. FERTILIZE every other week! (Don’t look at the directions. These plants are only going to be around for 3 months, so they can get much more fertilizer than prescribed!) Water daily!

Enjoy!

Bonita Friedland