

## **Try container-grown annuals to brighten bare spots in landscape**

There are areas in most landscapes where it is not practical or possible to bring in the tiller and create a flowerbed. But that doesn't mean you can't have color in those areas. A little imagination, a decorative container and appropriate plants can turn a bare spot into a splash of color.

Consider using a container of annuals to add color to a backyard deck or a paved entrance way. Or what about that area under the tree where grass doesn't want to grow and where it would be difficult to till without damaging the tree's roots and the tiller? How about the dry spot where there is no irrigation but where it would be more practical to occasionally hand water a well-placed container of colorful caladiums?

A wide variety of flowering annuals work well in containers. But be sure to select plants based on the exposure. Some annuals quickly bake from full sun exposure and others become leggy and bloom poorly in a shady location.

Impatiens and begonias do well in shaded places and remain in flower almost continuously. Caladiums also do well in containers in shady areas. They don't bloom but they have colorful leaves.

It's more difficult to grow container plants in full sun but there are some annuals to consider for sunny spots. Periwinkle and all types of portulaca are heat tolerant and do well in full sun.

There are many other annuals that can be successfully grown in containers. You might like to try ageratum or salvia. In addition to annual salvia, there are numerous perennial types to try. And there are sun-tolerant begonia and sun coleus varieties for full-sun places.

Plant your annuals in a big enough container. A three to five gallon container will allow the plants to grow. Make sure the container has adequate drainage. You'll have disappointing results if the plant's roots stay too wet.

Your potting media should drain well, also. A good quality commercial mix is excellent for growing annuals in containers. Some potting mixes have enough lime and fertilizer in them to get plants off to a good start. And they hold moisture and still provide good drainage.

Fertilize the plants during the growing season.

Controlled release fertilizers are ideal because they are labor saving. Simply mix the recommended amount in the potting media before planting for season long fertilization.

Use a liquid or a soluble fertilizer at the rate of one teaspoonful per gallon of water. Then do your normal watering with it every two to three weeks during the growing season.

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