

Cooler Weather Means Time to Plant Pansies

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service — Galveston County Office



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PHOTO CREDIT: William M. Johnson

Pansies have become the most popular cool season annual used to provide a dependable winter and early spring color display for Galveston County landscapes and gardens. Plant them in large drifts or masses, or as pockets of color to brighten up a dreary winter landscape.

The seasons are changing, and we are entering a transitional period in the flower garden when warm-season bedding plants begin to fade and cool-season bedding plants are planted to provide fall, winter and spring color.

It is possible that many of your warm season bedding plants are still hanging in

there at this point. If that's the case, leave the beds alone and enjoy the display until next month. But it is important to get cool season bedding plants into the ground in November or early December at the latest. This will give them a chance to get established before the coldest part of the winter.

Now through early December is the ideal time to be planting pansy transplants. Pansies require soil temperatures between 45 degrees and 65 degrees F. for best growth. Pansies planted after soil temperatures drop below 45 degrees F. show stunted, pale green leaves, little growth and





little or no flowering. Cold-stressed root systems are less efficient in taking up nutrients.

One of the benefits of living in the Texas Upper Gulf Coast region is that we can plant pansies now for enjoyment in the winter landscape. Pansies are a remarkable annual capable of surviving our coldest winter temperatures then bouncing back with vigor when warm weather returns.

Pansies have become the most popular cool season annual used to provide a dependable winter and early spring color display for Galveston County landscapes and gardens. Their versatile use in the landscape, easy culture, and abundant blooms make them quite worthy of their popularity.

On the other hand, pansies planted too early and exposed to warm temperatures often appear yellow; the stems stretch and the new growth will appear as small rosettes at the ends of stems. As a result, the plants flower poorly and are more susceptible to frost damage or disease.

Even though they may look delicate, pansies are tough plants as they are one of the few flowers that withstand cold temperatures (down to the single digits) and still provide a spectacular show when temperatures warm up.

Pansies thrive during our typically mild winters. They will continue to provide blooms through the spring

season which is their peak performance period.

Pansies should be planted in beds that receive full sun or only partial shade. The soil should be well-turned to a depth of 6-to-8 inches and the addition of organic amendments, such as garden compost or composted manure, is beneficial.

Pansies lend themselves to a wide range of applications in the home landscape. They are popular in large formal plantings, as borders, and in planter boxes. They are also popular as background or fill-in annuals for spring bulbs. Their long season of bloom is excellent in providing rich, colorful blooms from the spring season to the bloom season of early summer annuals.

Pansies have one of the widest range of flower colors of any garden annual. Included in the wide color range are red, purple, blue, bronze, pink, black, yellow, white, lavender, orange, apricot and mahogany. Flowers may be single-colored, streaked, or blotched.

Choose healthy, fresh plants for planting. Most transplants are sold locally in multi-pak units or by the individual plant. Purchase stocky plants with at least 4 to 5 strong leaves.

Space individual plants 6 to 10 inches apart to provide a solid mass of color. Be sure that the top of each transplant's potting mix is about 1/4 inch below the soil line. However, do not plant too deeply

as the tender plants become more susceptible to root rot.

To keep pansies blooming profusely, fertilize lightly every month with a general purpose, complete fertilizer (such as 13-13-13) or a slow release fertilizer such as Osmocote. To maximize flower production, be sure to keep spent flowers pinched off.

Water the newly planted pansies well. Mulch pansy beds with shredded pine bark to provide a distinctive background contrast that enhances the green foliage and colorful flowers.

Pansies are easy to grow and will reward a homeowner's efforts with an abundance of color. There is a place for them in every Galveston County garden. Plant now and enjoy their smiling faces in your fall, winter, and early spring garden.

At a Glance

Fall Plant Sale: 9:00 - 11:00 A.M., Thursday, November 14. Master Gardeners will conduct a plant sale at the Discovery Garden located in Carbide Park (4102 Main Street, La Marque). A variety of plants remaining from the Annual Fall Plant Sale will be available at additionally discounted prices including citrus trees, bulbs, perennials and cool-season vegetables for planting in the fall vegetable garden.

