

Garden Update

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Using Annual and Perennial Flowers to Boost Curb Appeal

When we think of flowering annuals and perennials as limited resources, using them wisely contributes to maximizing curb appeal. After all, not everyone has unlimited budgets or time to have flower color everywhere.

A word about the color green—green piques our interest in the winter and early spring landscapes, most notably because there is so little of it around (think evergreens and patches of lawn showing through the snow.) That perspective changes as landscapes green up in the spring and THEN green switches from being a focal point to becoming a background color. This transition is important because flowers show to their best advantage when placed in front of a backdrop of green.

Landscape design aspires to take its cues from Mother Nature, with an overstory—consisting of large and medium sized trees; an understory—utilizing small trees and large and medium sized shrubs; and groundcover made up of small shrubs, annuals, and perennials. This makes annual and perennial flowers important components in landscape design.

Annual flowers need to be planted every year, but on the plus side, they reward us with season long color. The most important place to use annuals, regardless if they are in containers or planted in the ground, is near the front door. From the perspective of the curb, the front door is the focal point, and the season long flowers annuals provide mean colors will continue to draw attention to the front door.

Perennial flowers, with their winter hardiness, are blooming show-stoppers, even though flowering lasts about two weeks each year. Perennials can and should be added to flowering plant masses near the front door, but one or two plants alone do not provide the massing necessary for the orchestration of color season long. In cases where space is limited, grouping a few perennials with an annual or two helps to boost the level of color while providing a backdrop of green.

Annual and perennial flowers don't just look pretty—they benefit pollinators and songbirds, contribute to biodiversity, act as a guide as we move through landscapes, elicit emotions of joy and calm, and reinforce focal points. While planning your gardening season, remember to add flowers to your list!