



Take a Chance on Seeds

The instant gratification experienced by choosing and planting flowering plants grown by your local garden center is nice, no doubt. But this year, why not experience the satisfaction of growing some annuals from seed?

It's inexpensive, and it gives you the chance to try out some varieties that are not readily available as plants. Many of them can be sown directly into the garden. Some need to be planted inside a few weeks before they can move outside.

Cosmos are good plants to try if you've never planted annuals from seeds before. They have large, easy-to-handle seeds that germinate quickly. Some varieties will bloom from seeds in as little as eight weeks.

Plant cosmos seeds in a sunny area in ordinary garden soil. They are easy to grow, thrive in heat and humidity, and do not need any fertilizer.

Cosmos are available in a variety of colors from pink, white and lavender to yellow, red and orange. They are good choices for cut flowers, and birds and butterflies love them, too. Leave a few seed heads on the plants at the end of the season and they will self-sow giving you new plants next year.



Sunflowers are another great choice for beginning gardeners. Like cosmos, their seeds are large and easy to handle. Plant seeds in peat pots inside several weeks before the last frost, or wait to plant them directly into the garden after the danger of frost has passed.

There are so many varieties of sunflowers available today it may be difficult to choose. Some are petite types perfect for containers; some are traditional giants growing to 15 feet tall; and there are lots of varieties in between. Choose them in just about any shade of yellow, orange, dark red, and bronze.

Plant tall types in a hedge and you'll have plenty for snacking – by you and the birds! Plant a group in the vegetable garden and include a few in your containers. Their cheery faces will make you smile all summer long.

My gardens wouldn't be without nasturtiums. Easy to grow, they thrive planted in a lean garden soil in a sunny spot. Plant seeds directly into the garden. To encourage faster germination, soak seeds overnight.

Nasturtiums are available in colors from soft white to fiery red; some even have variegated foliage. There are types that cascade perfect for hanging baskets or trailing over the edge of large containers. Choose a climbing variety to grow up a small trellis or obelisk. A dwarf variety is the perfect choice for container gardens or edging a bed where it will continue to bloom all summer long.

Both their flowers and attractive, round leaves are edible. They add peppery flavor to salads or pasta dishes.



Zinnias are an old-fashioned favorite that add bold, bright color to your pots or borders. Varieties are available in any color except blue, and will bloom their hearts out from mid summer until frost. Height can be 6 to 36 inches and anywhere in between. Flowers may be single, semi-double, or double from 1 to 6 inches across.

Taller types are superb for cutting and the back of the border. Shorter varieties are perfect in containers or edging the front of a garden bed.

Zinnias love the heat. Plant them in full sun giving them plenty of space to keep their foliage mildew-free.

I love bachelor buttons! Their bright blue color is striking in the garden. Plant them in good garden soil in a sunny spot. Make several sowings a couple weeks apart, and you'll have flowers all summer long. Leave seed heads in the fall and they will grace your garden with more plants next year, too.

In addition to blue, bachelor buttons also come in pink, lavender and white. They grow from 1 to 3 feet tall. Flowers dry well if picked when newly opened and hung upside down in a cool, dark place.

Choose morning glories if you want a fast-growing vine. They will quickly cover a fence, obelisk or other structure and bloom all summer long in shades of blue, pink, rose and red.

Soak the seeds in water overnight before planting. Plant them directly into a sunny spot in the garden after danger of frost has passed. If you want to give them a head start indoors, plant them in peat pots and then plant them pot and all into the garden. Morning glories resent transplanting.

While you're satisfying your need for instant gratification with annuals already blooming in their pots, pick up a few packs of seeds too. Enjoy the satisfaction of watching a plant grow, find some new flower favorites, and save some money, too!



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