

# How to Plant Annuals

**Annuals** are flowering plants that complete their growing cycle within one growing season. Usually you purchase annuals in early spring and plant them as soon as the last frost date. Some “half hardy” annuals, like pansies, will withstand a light frost. You can plant these during cool weather.

## Getting Annuals Ready to Plant

**Small cell packs** Small cell packs dry out quickly. If you can’t plant them immediately, keep them in a lightly shaded area. Be sure to water as needed. Remove dead flowers to prevent decay.

**Plants started indoors** If you have started plants indoors, harden them off before planting outdoors. It prepares tender seedlings and transplants for the harsh outdoor environment. It takes about two weeks.

To harden plants, place them in a lightly shaded area outdoors and gradually expose them to longer periods of sunlight over a two-week period. Reduce watering. Do not fertilize again until planting time.

**Before planting** Before planting annuals:

- Water the plants thoroughly and let drain for 5 to 10 minutes before removing the plants from their container.
- Slightly moisten the garden bed prior to planting.

## Planting

**Time of day** Plant in late afternoon when the sun is less intense or on an overcast day. It prevents stressing the transplants.

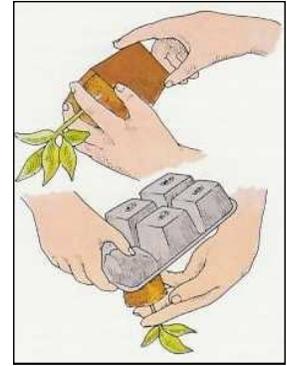
**Tools** A handheld trowel is the only tool you need for planting.

**Spacing** Don’t space the plants too close together. They’ll fill in rapidly as they mature. Set them in small groupings of at least three plants, unless you’re creating a border, in which case planting them in a straight row is fine.

## Planting steps

1. Lift the plants from their containers.

- On individually potted plants, slip one hand, palm down, over the potting mix with the stems between your fingers. Carefully invert the pot over that hand. With your other hand, tap the pot to loosen it, then lift the pot off the plant.
- If the plants are growing in flexible cell packs, push up on the bottom of each cell to pop them out.



If multiple plants are growing together in one tray, use a sharp knife to separate them. Remove plants one at a time and plant immediately to prevent drying.

**Peat pots.** When transplanting from individual peat pots, remove any part of the pot that extends above the soil surface. If left on, it can act as a wick and dry out the roots around the interior of the peat pot. Remove the bottoms of peat pots to allow for better rooting and drainage.



2. Carefully untangle any circling roots and loosen compacted roots by either gently breaking the soil ball apart or cutting the sides of the root ball with a knife.

3. Set the plant into the hole with the base of its stem slightly below the hole's rim. Return the soil to the hole and firm it around the plant, creating a slight depression around the plant's stem to direct water there.

4. Water thoroughly and mulch with an organic material. Make sure the mulch doesn't touch the stem. If you want, apply a starter fertilizer.

## Watering

Annuals need at least an inch of water each week.

"Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service"

K-State Research and Extension is committed to making its services, activities, and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, please contact Johnson County Extension at 913.715.7000. K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

REV 2022

