

# WINTER GARDENING

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Annuals flowers or seasonal flowers are the group of plants which grow from seeds and complete their life cycle in one season or one year. These plants vary widely in growth habit, form, flower color and size. Annuals flowers beautify the surroundings and exhibit a good show of blooms at low cost and labour. No garden, whether it is a large public garden or a small private garden, is complete without beds of annual flowers. They provide spectacular display of colour and add immensely to the decorative value of a garden within a short span of time. They have become indispensable for uplifting the face value of a garden. Seasonal flowers are widely grown for garden decoration, cut flowers and pot plants.

Dried flowers of some annuals are also commonly used for interior decoration. In beds they are grown individually or with or without perennials plants in borders. They are used for growing in hanging baskets, window boxes or rock garden for training on walls and trellices and for planting in the form of edges, borders or ground covers.

Some are also being used in industries for making various products such as confectionery, cosmetics and pharmaceutical purposes.

Winter is the best time in India to grow beautiful blooming annuals. The winter annuals flowering seeds are sown between October and November. Start growing before the spring sets in because many seedlings can hibernate during the cold months of December and January.

## Winter Season Annuals

This group includes a large number of seasonal flowers. These are acroclium, ageratum, antirrhinum, arctotis, bells of Ireland, brachycome, calendula, candytuft, carnation, ice plant, nasturtium, pansy, petunia, phlox, salvia, statice, sweet alyssum, sweet pea, clarkia, china aster, annual chrysanthemum, cineraria, godetia, gazania, cornflower, dianthus, delphinium, daisy, dimorphotheca, eschscholzia, echium, helichrysum, hollyhock, gypsophilla, linum, marigold, sweet sultan, verbena, wall flowers etc.

## Nursery Raising

Prepare raised nursery beds/plots of 1sq m add well rotten farmyard manure to it and mix properly.



Sterilized the soil with formaline 5% (i.e. add 1litre of formaldehyde to 7 litres of water) up to a depth of 20cm, immediately cover, it with terpoulene and keep it as such for 72 hrs. Remove the cover, rake it and leave it exposed for at least three days. In absence of sterilization, the soil may be drenched with bavistin 0.1% (i.e. 1 gm of bavistin in 1 litre of water). Make 1-2 cm deep furrows about 6 cm apart sow the seeds thinly in furrows. If the seeds are very fine, mix it with equal quantities of sand before sowing. Cover the furrows with well sieved FYM and sand mixture. Finally, the beds may be covered with dry grass or the hessian cloth and irrigate it with a fine rose. The cover may be removed as soon as seeds start germinating.

**Time of sowing:** The winter annuals flowering seeds are sown between October and November.

**Transplanting:** Transplant healthy seedlings to well-prepared beds in evening hours or in morning hours if weather is too cold than transplant in morning hours. Irrigate the plants immediately after planting.

### Planting Distance

Tall group: 30x30cm

Medium group: 20x20 cm

Dwarf group: 15x15 cm

**Manuring:** In addition to farmyard manure, it is advisable to apply nitrogen, phosphorus and potash for getting good vegetative growth and flower production (quantity vary with crops). Whole phosphorus and potash should be applied at the time of land preparation whereas; Nitrogen should be applied in two split doses, 25 and 40 days after transplanting.

**After care:** During winter months, irrigate the crops after one week. Avoid excessive watering and irrigation should be done in the evening and morning hours. Foliar application of 0.1% urea is very helpful. Pinching is practiced in some annuals like annual chrysanthemum to get more side shoots. Weeding and hoeing should be done to avoid weed. Some annuals need support like sweet pea for which split bamboo sticks can be used. All cultural practices should be followed as and when required. Spray of pesticides according to occurrence of diseases and pests as these are less in winter months.

