

Pansies offer wide range of colors

Pansies are among the most popular garden flowers, offering a wide range of colors, markings and sizes.

They are perennial in most areas of North Carolina but can be grown as annual plant. Pansies flower best in early spring when day temperatures are mild and night temperatures are cool, according to N.C. Agricultural Extension Service horticulturists.

Pansies are used as border and mass plantings. They can be interplanted

with other flowering bulbs. Flowering commences with the bulbs and continues on into summer.

Instead of planting seed, most gardeners prefer to purchase plants already started in peat pots or dug bare rooted. While pansies can be planted anytime during the fall in Eastern North Carolina, best results are obtained in the Piedmont and mountains if they are planted during October and November. Choose only stocky plants that possess four to six leaves.

Potted pansies are readily available in early spring at most garden centers and will usually perform well in the garden.

Pansies thrive in a bright sunny location. Too much shade results in spindly plants with few flowers.

Plant pansies 6 to 12 inches apart. Press the soil firmly around the plants so that good contact is made with the roots.

Mulching is especially beneficial to pansies. It checks evaporation of water from the soil surface and controls weeds. Medium coarse peat moss or pine bark applied in a two to three-inch layer makes an excellent mulch and looks like soil.

Pansies should never be grown in areas where soil is allowed to become excessively dry. Pansies are very shallow rooted and, as a result, suffer quickly from insufficient moisture.

The soil should receive at least one inch of water each week from rain or watering. Avoid watering late in the dry to prevent disease development.

A succession of pansy blooms depends on regular fertilization. The first application of two pounds of 8-8-8 per 100 square feet should be made 7 to 10 days after planting in the fall. A second fertilization can be made in early January followed by a third in early March. High nitrogen fertilizer can cause excessive stem and foliage growth at the expense of flower production.

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