

# Gardening with Annuals in Florida<sup>1</sup>

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Annuals offer an almost infinite variety of flower color and plant form. They brighten landscape beds and add a splash of color to a porch, deck, or patio when placed in containers. Some also make good cut flowers (Table 1).



Figure 1. Gaillardias make a good cut flower.

In Florida, most annuals only last one season (not one year). To be successful, they must be planted at the right time. Typically, annuals are divided into two types: warm season and cool season. Warm-season (tender) annuals are damaged by frosts or freezes and should be planted after the last frost date. Based on historical records, this is typically March 15 for North Florida and February 15 for Central Florida; frosts and freezes are rare in South Florida. However, early and late frosts can occur almost anywhere

in the state, and tender annuals need to be covered if this occurs. Cool-season (hardy) annuals are intolerant of heat, rainfall, and humidity. They are planted in fall and usually expire with the onset of summer (late May/June).



Figure 2. Coleus are a great warm-season annual.

Florida's winter climate varies greatly from north to south. For example, impatiens, normally considered a warm-season annual for shade in North and Central Florida, thrive in full sun as a winter annual in South Florida. Additionally, some plants considered annuals in North Florida grow as perennials in South Florida and vice versa. Unfortunately, annuals are sometimes sold "out of season" and are therefore short-lived in the garden. Table 2 provides the typical planting and removal times for the potted

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