

SPRING COLOR

The trees have flowered and gone to leaf, lining the streets and filling our yards with shades of green to keep us cool in the upcoming summer months. To keep your yard filled with color through the growing season it's time to place perennials and prepare annual beds.

Color can make a strong impact in a landscape if placed strategically around the yard. Choose areas that will be seen by cars passing by or neighbors taking a late afternoon stroll down the street. Dress up areas near the driveway and make a statement that creates a welcoming entrance to your home. Add drifts of color along your walkway that will cheerfully lead people to your door.

The annual and perennial garden is something that should not be left for others to only enjoy. Add splashes of color around your patio area making the space more inviting and intriguing to those enjoying the outdoors. The many nooks around the typical yard can be planted and enjoyed by a homeowner through a window or while out in the yard.

There is more than one way to exploit the beauty of the annual flower. Many people like to plant them in the ground but others prefer to make them mobile and move them around the landscape. This option allows you to create change in the landscape as the growing season moves towards fall. Annuals are a perfect match for summer pots. There are a variety of pots from large ceramic urns to small and bright colored containers. Use these to add color, interest, and draw attention to the plants placed within.

Hanging baskets are another option to brighten your yard and home. There are a variety of new and old favorites that will add spectacular color around a landscape. Baskets, like pots, come with a range of options. Use large hanging baskets to frame an entry or place small baskets to adorn a patio for a gathering. The options for hanging basket use are great and the display provided will be vast.

Don't forget about window boxes. Many people enjoy seeing a display of color at the base of their windows. With shades partially open color can still be seen from inside the house while maintaining privacy if sought. This type of treatment to a house makes a visual display for both the homeowner and people passing by, while adding color at a level in the landscape that will be seen by many.

Now that you've considered the options for your color it's time to prepare the space in which they will be established. The first step when preparing a planting bed is to choose a space and begin clearing out the area. With a good rake remove

any existing plant litter, preparing the site for soil amendments. If possible, till up the native earth loosening the soil which prepares it for the addition of organic nutrients. Spread a four inch layer of a good compost material such as mushroom compost or Kelloggs Amend and blend it into the native soil. You should have a deep colored soil left behind that is now ready for the annuals and perennials to be planted. You will undoubtedly encounter many rocks; if you have the patience, remove as many as possible to make future digging easier.

When placing the plants in the newly prepared flower bed arrange them in large groups by type. This will create waves of flowers and be more interesting and pleasing to the eye. Don't be afraid to mix colors but try to be consistent throughout your landscape when choosing your plant color palette. This will create the most visual impact in your yard.

Consider the coming months when choosing your flowering plants and pick varieties that will bloom at various times and throughout the growing season. This will allow you to have a wonderful display from spring through fall. For the best selection of the latest cultivars and colors, visit an independent nursery garden center where the staff is knowledgeable and has experience with the peculiar challenges of high desert gardening in greater Reno-Tahoe. You'll get sound advice on what will work best for your particular needs and how to maintain what you select. Or, if you prefer, just wonder through the aisles and discover the new colors and varieties of plants that you can use to create your new annual and perennial beds.