



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Create Your Summer Flower Beds Now (April 20, 2024)

By Michelle Le Strange, UCCE Farm Advisor, Emeritus

It's spring, and one of the great joys of the next couple of months is the cheerful color and abundance of flowers. It's not too late for you to establish a landscape bed of flowering plants. You just need to fill it full of summer flowering annuals and fall blooming perennials and start now.

Growing bedding plants isn't that much of a challenge; however, creating an impact on the landscape with bedding plants is trickier and requires a little art and science. Science-wise, success in growing bedding plants depends on the characteristics of the planting site. The amount of sun or shade, soil moisture, and soil type dictate the kinds of bedding plants that can be easily grown at a particular site. Although bedding plants have different requirements, most will grow and flower best on well-drained sites that have exposure to full sunlight or partial afternoon shade. Expect poor performance if the planting site is on heavy soil that remains waterlogged when irrigated. With the exception of a few shade-tolerant bedding plants, most planted in shady areas will be weak and spindly with few flowers.

Types of landscape beds

A border bed usually runs parallel to a driveway, a picket fence or wall, or a row of green shrubs--something that acts as a backdrop to the flower bed. Plants can be grouped and staggered, but the tallest plants should be in the back of the bed and the shorter ones in front.



An island bed can be round, square, rectangular, or kidney-shaped. Because island beds are viewed from all directions, tall plants should be placed in the center, medium-height plants on all sides, and dwarf plants at the edges of the bed. Island beds are easier to maintain because they are accessible from all sides.

A corner bed is triangular in shape and usually has a curved front. Arrange plants with the lowest plants in front and the tallest in the rear.

Bed shape and design

The shape of beds and borders will greatly influence the character of your landscape. Straight, angular lines are usually uninteresting and can be monotonous because they are repeated in walks, drives, and property lines. However, when the landscape's overall design is composed of straight lines or when the overall architectural design favors that geometry, angular lines can be used in beds and borders to complement the design scheme.

Curved or free-flowing beds and borders are restful to the eye and create a relaxing feeling, which contributes to an informal, natural effect. Before going to the nursery, sketch your ideas on paper, then go outside and, with a garden hose or two, outline the shape of your beds and analyze them for dimension, scale, and size. Look at them from different views from inside and outside the house. Adjust the hoses until you achieve a design that is satisfactory.

If you are creating a bed for the front yard, then be sure to compliment the house and highlight the front door or walkway. You are not trying to separate the landscape from the house but incorporating and blending them into one. Masses of colorful bedding plants add brilliance and a welcoming note to the front of a home.

Purchasing plants and supplies.

At the nursery, choose the plants that will form the foundation, the color bursts, the textures, the diversity, and the unifying elements for your beds. The more you mix, the less formal the effect. The more you match, the more formal the effect.

We suggest that you choose plants carefully for our summers in the valley and foothills. Try to select plants that have matching irrigation requirements and select drought-tolerant and water-thrifty plants. There are many perennial herbs and annuals adapted to our Mediterranean climate that are underutilized and are being showcased in nurseries right now. We want our flower beds to require less water than our tall fescue lawns in the summer.

Pick and purchase plants not yet in full bloom. Look for bright or dark green foliage on short branching stems and slightly moist soil. Arrange your choices on your cart and make sure that you are satisfied with how they blend together. Envision them in your yard.

Change out the ones that just don't seem to match. Don't forget to purchase compost, soil amendments, a mild fertilizer like Triple Sixteen, and organic mulch for the top layer.

At home, keep arranging the potted plants in the bed until you are satisfied with their placement. Then plant, water thoroughly, and mulch heavily to conserve the water that is used! Put that green thumb to work and have fun nurturing them through bloom.

The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse North parking lot

Sat., April 13 - Luis Nursery Plant Clinic, Caldwell & Mariposa, Visalia - 10 am - 2 pm

April 20 - Hofman's Nursery Plant Clinic, 12491 W Lacey, Hanford - 10 am - 1 pm

April 20 - Container Gardening Presentation, Tulare Public Library, Tulare, 11 am-Noon

April 27 - Kids Day Activities, Longfield Center, 560 S Douty St, Hanford - 9 am - 2 pm

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 am

Visit our website for past articles, sign up for our e-newsletter, or email us with your questions:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mgtularekings14/>; Instagram at: @mgtularekings