



Columbia Nursery

Planting & Caring for Annual Flowers in Northwest Montana (Zones 3–5)

Annual flowers bring vibrant seasonal color to gardens, containers, and hanging baskets throughout the growing season. With a few extra precautions suited to our short, cool-season climate, you can enjoy abundant blooms from early summer until the first fall frost.

When to Plant

- Wait until all danger of frost has passed and night temps are above 37 degrees—typically after May 31.
- Harden off starts by gradually introducing them to outdoor conditions for 5–7 days.
- For quick results, use well-established nursery starts.

Soil & Site Preparation

- Use well-drained soil enriched with compost for garden beds. We use our 4-way soil mix. It's already amended with a high-quality dairy compost.
- For containers and baskets, use high-quality potting mix—not garden soil. We grow all of our annual flowers in ProMix Potting soil.
- Add water-holding crystals or slow-release fertilizer (Espoma Flower Tone) to container mix for better performance.

Sunlight & Placement

- Match the flower's needs with its location:
 - Full sun: Petunias, million bells, marigolds, geraniums
 - Part shade: Begonias, impatiens, coleus, lobelia
- Avoid placing sun-loving flowers in shady areas—they'll become leggy and bloom poorly.

Watering Tips

- Water deeply when the top inch of soil feels dry.
- Containers and baskets dry out faster—check daily during hot weather.
- Use self-watering containers or drip irrigation for low-maintenance care.

Fertilizing for Blooms

- Feed every 1–2 weeks with a balanced liquid fertilizer. We recommend Jack's formulas for the best results. Choose the formula best suited to your flower type.
- Slow-release fertilizer can be mixed in at planting. (Espoma Flower Tone)
- Petunias, million bells, and other heavy bloomers thrive with regular feeding. We recommend Jack's Petunia FeEd for the best bloom performance with iron loving plants.

Deadheading & Maintenance

- Remove spent blooms to promote continual flowering.
- Pinch back leggy growth on petunias and trailing plants.
- Groom plants regularly for shape and vigor—especially in baskets.



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Trouble Shooting

High deer populations can be troublesome for annual flowers in NW Montana. Plan to use deer repellent (see below) or choose a deer resistant annual. Keep in mind that no flowers are deer proof.

Popular Annuals for Montana Gardens

- Petunias – long-blooming, sun-loving, ideal for beds and baskets
- Million Bells (Calibrachoa) – colorful trailers for containers
- Geraniums – sturdy upright bloomers for pots or borders
- Begonias – great for shade and baskets
- Impatiens – reliable color for shady beds
- Marigolds – easy and resilient in sun

With proper care and the right plant selection, your annuals will deliver cheerful color all summer long—even in Montana’s mountain climate!

Product Recommendations

Annuals - * denotes safe for organic gardening			
Bagged Soils	Bulk Soils	Composts	Fertilizers
GG Potting Soil	4 Way	GG Gold Compost	Espoma Bulb-tone
Happy Frog Potting Soil*		Dirt Rich	Espoma Flower Tone
ProMix Flower		Land & Sea Organic*	Jack's All Purpose 10-10-10
Items above are best for containers		Compost & Manure	Jack's Blossom Booster
		Organic Poultry Compost*	Jack's Classic
			Jack's Petunia FeEd

Troubleshooting	Treats
Ladybugs*	aphids
3-in-1 Insect, Disease & Mite Control	aphids, spider mites & others, Blight, Rust, Scab, Powdery Mildew
Bonide Captain Jack's Neem Max (insecticide)*	insects
Natria Neem Oil (insecticide)*	insects, powdery mildew
Plantskydd* - liquid deer repellent	deer repellent
Deer Scram - granular deer repellent	deer, rabbit, voles, repellent
Repellex - systemic deer repellent	deer repellent
I Must Garden - Deer Repellent Spray	deer repellent