

Colorful Pansies

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Without a doubt, PANSIES are the best flower for winter landscapes in Central and South Texas. If your flowerbed receives six hours or more of sunlight, they will perform admirably. There are two main types of pansies: clear-faced and monkey-faced. The Matrix Blotch Mix is a monkey-faced variety and has a dark blotch in the middle of the face. Pansies are available in a wide assortment of colors, such as, yellow, red, blue, white, maroon, and yes, even orange. Here are some tips for getting the best out of your new pansy planting. Look for the selections with the big blooms, they are the SHOWIEST!



How to Select and Buy Your New Transplants? Always select compact-not leggy-plants with deep green foliage. Before you buy, pop the plant out of its container; if it's root-bound, don't buy it. Plants that are leggy or root-bound have a hard time getting established. Purchase nice, full and pretty plants. Deadhead the faded blossoms to extend flowering.

Planting time is critical. It is true that pansies can weather temperatures in the single digits and bounce back after the weather warms. But they can be that strong and resourceful only if they've had a chance to get a good footing (developing a strong root system) before cold weather hits. For best results, plant pansies when the soil temperature is between 45 and 70 degrees F. Soil temperatures below 45 degrees at planting time will result in inactive roots, stunted plants, and little or no flowering. But if you plant too early-when the soil is above 70 degrees-you'll wind

up with leggy plants, yellowish leaves and few flowers. Pansies planted then are also more susceptible to frost.

A raised bed in full sun is the best place to grow pansies. Add one cup of slow-release lawn fertilizer and 2 pounds of a bone meal and blood meal mixture spread over 50 square feet of bed. Incorporate into the soil at the initial planting stage. Plant individual pansy transplants every six inches to about one foot apart in your landscape. They will have to be watered every day for the first five days. After that, water twice a week or whenever the soil dries to one inch deep. Two inches of mulch helps conserve water and improves pansy performance. It is most efficient to water with drip irrigation laid underneath two inches of a fine, organic living mulch. Control slugs and snails with a slug and insect bait.

Deer love pansies, so don't plant them where the pests can reach them. Slugs, snails, and pill bugs also eat pansies. To control them, apply slug and snail bait every two weeks. Your pansies will bloom all winter long, and often last until the end of March.

Protect your pansies during cold weather by temporarily allowing them to wilt! The dry leaves are not damaged by cold; they recover nicely when warmer temperatures appear. But if the soil is frozen while dry, with frigid winds howling across the leaves, the roots of the pansy plants will be unable to transport water back to the leaves. For this reason, keep beds thoroughly mulched with at least two inches of living organic mulch during the winter. If a Siberian Express is forecast, cover all of your beds with a layer of winter protection, such as Gro-Web or Insulate. These protective blankets will hold heat in the soil, and it will shelter pansy leaves from the harsh winds. Always water your flower beds and container plants thoroughly, and protect before a prolonged cold spell.

Get out there and buy some colorful, cool-weather pansy plants for your landscape, before the selections are all picked over!

Remember, Learn and Have Fun!

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