

Annuals for Nebraska Landscapes

I. Flowering Plants

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This NebGuide describes those annual flowers that can be grown in Nebraska for use by the home gardener in landscape design.

Annuals are non-woody plants that complete their life cycle in one growing season, ending with seed production. Annuals provide color from early summer until frost, an advantage over most perennial flowers, which usually have a shorter blooming season. Certain annuals, such as moss rose, California poppy and alyssum, may self-seed, but most annuals must be planted yearly. Some perennial plants that live from year to year in warmer climates, such as begonias and snapdragons, are included with annuals in Nebraska since they are not winter-hardy and must be replanted each year.

Annuals allow different colorful landscape displays to be created from year to year using a wide variety of available plant material. The cost and time required to replace these plants each year, as well as the additional irrigation and fertilization

typically required for healthy establishment and growth, are potential disadvantages of using annual flowers.

Annuals can be used in beds, borders, rock gardens, window boxes, hanging baskets and container gardens. They can add focal color to entrances or enhance monotonous landscapes. Annuals can be used in newly planted perennial or shrub beds and borders, filling the vacant spaces with color until the permanent plantings mature.

Consider site conditions and the preferred growing requirements of annuals when designing with them. Annuals are generally incorporated into a design for their color, but texture, form, size and mass characteristics also contribute to the overall effect. Evaluate the planting site’s sun exposure, wind patterns, water requirements, soil type and fertility, and then choose plants that will perform well in these conditions.

The following list of plants contains suggestions for annuals that are grown for their colorful flower displays. These annuals can be directly seeded into the garden but are usually purchased or grown as transplants.

Common Name(s)	Botanical Name	Site	Height	Flower/Foliage	Color Comments
Abelmoschus	<i>Abelmoschus moscheutos</i>	Sun	10-14”	Red, dark pink	Needs hot weather, blooms mid-summer, self-seeds
African Daisy	<i>Arctotis venusta</i> , <i>Dimorphotheca aurantiaca</i>	Sun	12-18”	Yellow, red, pink, bronze, white, orange	Drought-resistant, needs well-drained soil
Ageratum	<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>	Sun, part shade	6-12”	Blue, lavender, white	Trim off old flowers for repeat bloom
Amaranthus; Joseph’s Coat; Summer Poinsettia	<i>Amaranthus tricolor</i>	Sun	18-48”	Colored foliage	Accent, background in border, difficult to transplant—best direct seeded, suitable for poor soil
Ammobium; Winged Everlasting	<i>Ammobium elatum</i>	Sun	18-20”	White	Used as a dried flower
Angel Flower; Summer Snapdragon	<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>	Sun	18-24”	Purple to white	Aromatic, smooth-textured foliage, very long season of bloom
Angel’s Trumpet	<i>Brugmansia x hybrida</i> , <i>Datura metal</i>	Sun, part shade	36-60”	Assorted	All parts highly toxic, trumpet-like flowers, good container plant
Baby’s Breath, Annual	<i>Gypsophila elegans</i>	Sun	12-18”	White, pink	Small flowers, short season, excellent filler for arrangements
Bachelor’s Button	<i>Centaurea cyanus</i>	Sun	6-24”	Blue, lavender, red, pink, white	For continuous bloom make repeated sowings, will self-seed, likes cool weather and dies in summer heat
Bacopa	<i>Bacopa x</i>	Sun, part shade	6”	Pink, white	Trailing, spreads 15-24”, foliage is yellow to green to variegated
Balsam; Garden Balsam	<i>Impatiens balsamina</i>	Sun	12-30”	White, purple, red	Prefers moist, rich soil, self-seeds easily

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Begonia, Angel Wing	<i>Begonia x hybrida</i>	Shade, part shade	12-20"	Red, pink, white	Bring indoors as a houseplant during cold temperatures
Begonia, Tuberous	<i>Begonia x tuber hybrida</i>	Shade, part shade	9-12"	Red, yellow, orange, white, pink	Store as a tuber during winter
Begonia, Wax	<i>Begonia x semperflorens-cultorum</i>	Shade, part shade	6-15"	White, pink, red	Various foliage colors, often grown from cuttings
Bells of Ireland	<i>Molucella laevis</i>	Sun	24"	Green	Grown for the green shell-like calyces on tall spikes, self-seeds, good cut flower, dry conditions
Black-eyed Susan; Gloriosa Daisy	<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Sun	24-36"	Yellow, brown, rust	Upright, adaptable to almost any type soil, sometimes a biennial or short-lived perennial
Blanket Flower, Annual	<i>Gaillardia pulchella</i>	Sun	12-18"	Red, orange, yellow	Short-lived, drought-tolerant, long season of bloom
Blood Flower	<i>Asclepias curassavica</i>	Sun, part shade	36-48"	Red, orange	Prefers moist, fertile soils, milkweed family, good cut flower
Blue Lace Flower	<i>Trachymene coerulea</i>	Part shade	18-24"	Blue, violet	Dead heading is recommended, can be used as a cut flower
Bush Violet; Browallia	<i>Browallia speciosa</i>	Part shade	12-18"	Purple, blue, violet	Rich, moist, well-drained soils
Calendula; Pot Marigold	<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	Part shade	10-24"	Yellow, orange	Flowers best in cool spring and fall, good container plant
California Poppy	<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>	Sun	8-12"	Yellow, orange, red, white	Naturalizes, self-seeds, tolerates dry conditions, avoid over-watering
Calla Lily	<i>Zantedeschia</i> spp.	Sun, part shade	24-48"	White	Planted outside as a tuber in early summer, dig and store tubers for winter
Candy Tuft	<i>Iberis amara</i>	Sun, part shade	6-12"	White, lilac, pink, red	Moist sites, fragrant
Canna	<i>Canna x generalis</i>	Sun, part shade	36-48"	Yellow, orange, red	Needs to be dug and stored in a non-freezing location each fall, good in water gardens and containers
Celosia	<i>Celosia argentea</i> var. <i>plumosa</i> and var. <i>spicata</i>	Sun	12-36"	Yellow, orange, apricot, pink, purple, red	Vertical, feathery flowers, prefers dry conditions, dead head to prevent reseeding
Celosia; Cockscomb	<i>Celosia cristata</i> , <i>C. argentea</i> var. <i>cristata</i>	Sun	18-30"	Red, pink, orange, yellow, salmon	Heat and drought tolerant, excellent for drying, crested form resembles rooster's comb, plumed form also available
Chrysanthemum	<i>Chrysanthemum carinatum</i>	Sun	12-18"	Assorted, tri-colored	Well-drained soils
Cleome; Spiderflower	<i>Cleome hassleriana</i> <i>C. serrulata</i>	Sun	36-48"	Pink, purple, white	Use in large beds, tall borders, heat-tolerant, will self-seed
Cobbity Daisy	<i>Argyranthemum frutescens</i>	Sun	15-18"	Magenta, fuchsia	Daisy-like flowers, attracts butterflies
Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis tinctoria</i> , <i>C. hybrida</i>	Sun	18-24"	Yellow, red	Requires consistently moist soils, attracts butterflies, reseeds
Cosmos	<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	Sun	18-60"	White, pink or crimson	Avoid overwatering, good cut flower
Cosmos, Sulphur	<i>Cosmos sulphureus</i>	Sun	18-24"	Red, yellow, orange, pink	Some cultivars are quite compact
Creeping Zinnia	<i>Sanvitalia</i> spp.	Sun, part shade	6"	Yellow	Prostrate growth with tiny flowers, good ground cover, tolerates drought
Dahlia	<i>Dahlia</i> spp.	Sun	6-36"	Assorted	Requires well-drained moist soil, heat-tolerant, taller varieties need staking, grown from seed or tuberous roots, requires digging and storage in non-freezing area
Dianthus; China Pinks	<i>Dianthus chinensis</i>	Sun, part shade	6-18"	Pink, red, white	Many cultivars, fragrant, tolerant of cool conditions
Diascia	<i>Diascia</i> spp.	Sun	12-15"	Rosy, coral pink, yellow-green spots	Dainty flowers, related to snapdragons, high moisture requirements
Eyeball Plant	<i>Spilanthes oleracea</i>	Sun	12-15"	Red, yellow	Red and yellow color, floral contrast
Flowering Tobacco	<i>Nicotiana glauca</i> , <i>N. sylvestris</i> , <i>N. sanderae</i>	Sun, part shade	9-36"	White, pink, rose red, mauve, lime green	Prefers moist, well-drained soil, fragrant, reseeds
Four-o'-Clocks	<i>Mirabilis jalapa</i>	Sun	24-36"	Pink, red, white, yellow, bicolor	Blooms in late afternoon, withstands heat and drought, will self-seed, seeds are poisonous
Fuchsia	<i>Fuchsia magellanica</i>	Part shade	12-15"	Fuchsia, purple	Pendulous flowers, good for hanging containers
Foxglove, Annual	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Sun, part shade	15-20"	White, cream, yellow, pink, rose, purple	Prefers moist, well drained soils, biennial
Gazania	<i>Gazania rigens</i>	Sun	8-12"	White, yellow, orange, red	Needs well-drained soil, likes heat, tolerates dry soil

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Geranium	<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>	Sun	10-25"	Red, pink, white, salmon	Easily propagated by cuttings, some cultivars can be grown from seed
Gerbera Daisy	<i>Gerbera jamesonii</i>	Sun	9-12"	Cream, red, orange, pink	Deeply lobed leaves
Globe Amaranth	<i>Gomphrena globosa</i> , <i>G. haageana</i>	Sun	18-30"	Purple, white, pink, orange, red	Clover-like straw flower, mound-forming plant, excellent for drying, <i>G. haageana</i> tends to sprawl
Heliotrope	<i>Heliotropium arborescens</i>	Sun	8-24"	Violet, lavender, white	Attracts butterflies, very fragrant
Impatiens	<i>Impatiens</i> spp.	Shade, part shade	6-12"	Assorted	Many species and cultivars from which to choose
Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Sun	12-18"	Yellow, orange, red, lavender	Likes warm sites, attracts butterflies, good container plant
Larkspur	<i>Consolida ambigua</i> , <i>C. ajacis</i>	Sun	25-30"	Pink, blue, white	Cut and dried flowers, may self-sow, keep well watered, likes cool conditions
Laurentia	<i>Laurentia hybrida</i>	Sun, part shade	18-24"	Blue	Tolerant of heat, must have good drainage, best for western Nebraska
Linaria; Toadflax	<i>Linaria maroccana</i>	Sun, part sun	15-24"	Pink, white, magenta	Prefers cool temperature, will reseed
Lisianthus	<i>Eustoma grandiflorum</i>	Sun	12-24"	White, yellow, pink, lavender, bicolor	A biennial which acts as an annual, good for cut flowers, start indoors very early
Lobelia	<i>Lobelia erinus</i>	Part shade	4-10"	Blue, white	Prefers cool temperatures, good container plant
Love-in-a-Mist; Devil in the Bush; Nigella	<i>Nigella damascena</i>	Sun	12-18"	Pink, blue, white	Self-seeds readily; when seed pod forms, it is called "Devil in the Bush"
Love-Lies-Bleeding	<i>Amaranthus caudatus</i>	Sun	36-60"	Red, gold	Long slender spikes of drooping to upright flowers, new selection is "Hot Biscuit"
Marigold, African	<i>Tagetes erecta</i>	Sun	12-40"	Yellow, orange, cream	Brilliant color, tall cultivars suited for mass plantings and cuttings, red spider mite may be problem
Marigold, French	<i>Tagetes patula</i>	Sun	6-12"	Yellow, orange, bronze	Bushier, more compact plant, smaller flowers, problems with red spider mite and aster yellows
Marigold, Signet	<i>Tagetes tenuifolia</i>	Sun	6"	Yellow	Good for edging borders and outdoor edible containers, flowers
Melampodium; Medallion Daisy	<i>Melampodium cinereum</i> , <i>M. paludosum</i>	Full sun	15-18"	Yellow-gold	Heat tolerant, 1" blooms, reseeds
Mexican Heather	<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i>	Sun	9-12"	Pink/violet	Flat feathery sprays of foliage, small flowers, good for small spaces and containers
Mexican Sunflower; Torch Flower	<i>Tithonia rotundifolia</i>	Full sun	4-6'	Reddish-orange	Makes a nice annual screen, attracts butterflies
Mexican Tulip Poppy; Golden Cup	<i>Hunnemannia fumarifolia</i>	Sun	12-20"	Bright clear yellow	Grayish-green dissected leaves
Million Bells	<i>Calibrachoa x hybridus</i>	Sun	9-12"	Assorted	Fragrant flowers, suitable for containers, moist soils
Monkey Flower	<i>Mimulus x hybridus</i>	Shade, part sun	12-14"	Yellow, orange, red, scarlet, wine	Prefers moist soil, cool temperature, light afternoon shade prolongs bloom
Moss Rose; Portulaca Rose Moss	<i>Portulaca grandiflora</i>	Sun	6"	Red, yellow, white, rose, orange, magenta	Thrives on poor, dry soil, easily self-seeds, avoid high nitrogen soils
Nasturtium	<i>Tropaeolum majus</i>	Sun, part sun	12-24"	Yellow, orange, red	Prefers poor soil and sun, edible buds, blooms and foliage
New Guinea Impatiens	<i>Impatiens x hybrida</i>	Shade, part shade	10-24"	Assorted	Good for containers, dramatic foliage
Osteospermum; Cape Daisy; Sun Marigold	<i>Dimorphotheca pluvialis</i> , <i>D. sinuata</i>	Sun	9-18"	White	Bushy plant, can self seed
Pansy	<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>	Part shade	8-12"	Assorted	Hardy annual, flowers best in cool season, best if seeded in late summer and transplants overwintered in cold frame for early planting
Pentas; Star Cluster	<i>Pentas lanceolata</i>	Sun, part shade	15-30"	Red, pink, white	Attracts butterflies, can be used in containers, combines well with other annuals
Persian Shield	<i>Strobilanthes dyerianum</i>	Sun, part shade	12"	Blue	Shiny dark purple/bronze foliage, short spikes of funnel-shaped flowers
Petunia	<i>Petunia x hybrida</i>	Sun, part shade	12-18"	Assorted	Shear in mid-summer to induce blooms
Petunia; Supertunia	<i>Petunia x hybrida</i>	Sun	6-9"	Assorted	Trailing habit, heat and drought tolerant
Petunia, Wave	<i>Petunia x hybrida</i>	Sun	6-8"	Assorted	Low-growing, ground cover-like
Phlox, Annual	<i>Phlox drummondii</i>	Sun, part shade	6-15"	Red, pink, white, purple, peach	Easy to grow, long blooming season, prefers cool sites

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Pimpernel;Blue Pimpernel	<i>Anagallis monelli</i> (L.), <i>A. arvensis</i> var. <i>caerulea</i>	Sun	12" trailing	Blue	Bright blue flowers on heat-tolerant plants
Plectranthus; Silver Spur Flower	<i>Plectranthus argentatus</i>	Sun	6-12"	White, pale lilac	Leaves large, velvety, gray and succulent, deep veins
Primula	<i>Primula</i> spp.	Part shade	10-12"	Lavender, red, pink, yellow, white	Bedding, edging, attracts butterflies
Salvia; Mealycup	<i>Salvia farinacea</i>	Sun	18"	Blue, white, purple	Multiple spikes, leaves are long, soft, light green to silver
Salvia, Scarlet Sage	<i>Salvia splendens</i>	Sun, part shade	12-24"	Scarlet, red, pink white, salmon, purple	Blooms freely in late summer and fall, spike flower
Salvia, Texas	<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	Sun	18-30"	Red, pink, white, bi-colored	Blooms from early summer to frost, attracts hummingbirds
Scabiosa;Pincushion Flower	<i>Scabiosa stellata</i> , <i>S. atropurpurea</i>	Sun	12-24"	White, light blue, pink, burgundy	Flower heads useful in dried arrangements, good cut flower, heat-tolerant
Scaevola; Blue Fan Flower	<i>Scaveola aemula</i>	Sun	6-9"	Blue, violet, white	Thick, coarsely toothed leaves, tolerates some drought, good container plant
Snapdragon	<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	Sun	6-36"	Assorted	Excellent cut flower, semi-tall and dwarf varieties require no staking, use rust-resistant cultivars, cool conditions
Standing Cypress	<i>Ipomopsis rubra</i>	Sun	2-3' spikes	Red, yellow, orange, white	Spike flower attracts butterflies, biennial grown as a half-hardy annual
Statice; Sea Lavender	<i>Limonium sinuatum</i>	Sun, part shade	18"	White, lavender, yellow, pink, blue, apricot	Rosette of foliage, good for drying
Strawflower	<i>Helichrysum bracteatum</i>	Sun	10-30"	Yellow, pink, white, red, orange	Excellent dried flower, dwarf cultivars available
Sunflower	<i>Helianthus annuus</i>	Sun	12-84"	Yellow, bronze, red, gold, cream	Background or screen planting, dwarf cultivars available, make multiple planting for continuous blooms
Sweet Alyssum	<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sun, part shade	4-6"	White, lavender, burgundy	Low trailing plant with tiny flowers, very fragrant
Sweet Annie	<i>Artemisia annua</i>	Sun	48-72"	Inconspicuous	Grown for foliage, fragrant, foliage can be dried
Trachelium; Blue Throatwort	<i>Trachelium caeruleum</i>	Part shade	24-36"	Blue, violet	Attracts butterflies, drought-tolerant, small flowers, cut flowers
Verbena, African	<i>Verbena bonariensis</i>	Sun, part shade	48"	Purple, violet	Erect growing, creates 'airy' element, attracts butterflies, self-seeds
Verbena, Garden	<i>Verbena x hybrida</i>	Sun, part shade	12-15"	Blue, red, white, peach	Easy to grow, water moderately, intense colors, loves heat
Vinca; Madagascar Periwinkle	<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Sun	10-14"	Pink, rose, red, purple, white	Glossy leaves, tolerates poorer soils, works well in containers, good heat tolerance, good bedding plant
Viola	<i>Viola cornuta</i>	Part shade	6"	Blue, gold, red, apricot	Prefers cool, moist conditions
Zinnia	<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	Sun	6-40"	Assorted	Excellent cut flower and bedding plant, powdery mildew may be a problem in late summer, keep the foliage dry, select mildew resistant cultivars
Zinnia, Mexican	<i>Zinnia angustifolia</i>	Sun	12-16"	White, gold, orange	Excellent for hot dry areas, powdery mildew less of a problem than for <i>Zinnia elegans</i> , can be dried

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