



WARM WEATHER FLOWER GARDENING

Bright Colors From Spring to Fall

STARNOTE 310
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As the desert heat arrives, it's time to transition your garden to vibrant, heat-tolerant flowers. While our climate presents unique challenges, with careful planning and the right plant choices, you can enjoy a stunning floral display all season long.

Understanding Our Climate:

Our desert climate offers two primary planting seasons: spring and fall. While some flowers can bridge the gap, most thrive in either cool or warm temperatures.

Annual All-Stars: A Burst of Seasonal Color

Annuals complete their entire life cycle—from germination to seed—in a single growing season. While they require more frequent planting than perennials, they provide an unmatched intensity of color and variety. Use these seasonal favorites to fill gaps between perennial blooms and create a stunning, high-impact display in your desert landscape:

Alyssum: A low-growing carpet of tiny, fragrant flowers in shades of white, pink, or purple, Alyssum creates a delicate and charming ground cover. Its ability to self-seed makes it a carefree addition to your garden.

Begonia: Add a touch of elegance to shady areas with Begonia's delicate blooms and lush foliage. Available in a variety of colors, begonias thrive in containers or as accents in shady gardens.

Celosia: Make a bold statement with Celosia's unique and striking flower spikes. With colors ranging from fiery reds to golden yellows, this heat-loving annual adds visual interest and texture.

Impatiens: Perfect for shaded areas, Impatiens offers a wide range of vibrant colors to brighten your garden. Its succulent stems and delicate blooms make it a popular choice for containers and hanging baskets.

Lobelia: Create a cascading effect with Lobelia's trailing vines adorned with tiny, bell-shaped flowers. Ideal for containers, hanging baskets, and as a ground cover in shady areas.

Marigolds: A classic summer favorite, Marigolds boast a cheerful array of colors, from golden yellows to fiery oranges and reds. Their ability to deter pests makes them a gardener's ally.

Million Bells (Calibrachoa): These look like miniature petunias but are much more heat tolerant. They produce a "carpet" of hundreds of small, bell-shaped flowers. In the

Southwest, they are spectacular in hanging baskets or containers where they can trail over the edges.

Petunias: Known for their large, trumpet-shaped blooms, Petunias offer a wide range of colors and patterns. They are versatile plants that thrive in containers, hanging baskets, and garden beds.

Sumer Snapdragon (Angelonia): A desert superstar that loves the heat. It produces upright spikes of flowers in purple, pink, or white and remains lush and vibrant even through the hottest July afternoons without drooping.

Vinca: With its glossy foliage and vibrant blooms in a variety of colors, Vinca brings a tropical feel to your garden. This heat-tolerant plant is perfect for filling in gaps and adding color to containers.

Zinnia: A classic summer annual, Zinnias offer a dazzling array of colors and sizes. From dwarf varieties to tall, cut flower options, Zinnias are a must-have for any sunny garden.

Year-Round Garden Beauty: Perennials and Annuals

Perennial Powerhouses:

Perennials are the backbone of a low-maintenance, sustainable garden. These resilient plants return year after year, offering continuous color and interest with minimal effort. Enjoy a stunning floral display season after season by incorporating a variety of perennials into your landscape. For a comprehensive list of perennial options, refer to Star Note #300: Reliable Perennial Flowers.

Dianthus (Pinks): Graceful mounds of color in a rainbow of hues, from deep red to soft pink and vibrant purple. These low-maintenance beauties thrive in both spring and fall, providing sporadic blooms throughout the year.

Gazania: This sun-loving plant boasts vibrant, daisy-like blooms in a range of colors. Perfect for ground cover or as a focal point, Gazania thrives in our hot climate.

Star Flowers: A profusion of tiny, star-shaped blooms in white, pink, lilac, or red create a delightful carpet of color. This versatile plant thrives in borders, masses, or containers.

Snapdragons: Available in a range of sizes and colors, snapdragons add height and visual interest to your garden. They are excellent for both containers and garden beds.

Tender Perennials

These plants are technically perennials, but in the Desert Southwest, they are often treated as "temperate" additions. They may need extra protection during our coldest winter nights or the most intense summer heat.

- **Bacopa:** A popular filler plant that produces a literal "snowstorm" of tiny white, blue, or pink flowers. Perfect for the edges of containers or hanging baskets, it prefers morning sun and afternoon shade in the desert to stay lush.
- **Brachyscome (Swan River Daisy or Outback Daisy):** This Australian native loves our dry air. Featuring delicate, fern-like foliage and small daisy-like blooms in purple, blue, or white, it's an excellent choice for rock gardens or as a soft "spiller" in pots.

Handy Warm Weather Tips

To cultivate a thriving flower garden in our desert climate, follow these essential tips:

- **Soil Preparation:** Enrich your soil with Paydirt Planting Mix and Dr. Q's Gold Dust Starter Fertilizer for optimal growth.
- **Watering Wisely:** Avoid overhead watering, as it can lead to fungal diseases and distorted blossoms. Opt for drip irrigation or hand watering at the base of plants.
- **Drainage:** Ensure your garden has good drainage to prevent root rot.
- **Sunlight:** Choose the right location for each plant based on its sun requirements.
- **Deadheading:** Regularly remove spent blooms to encourage continuous flowering.
- **Fertilization:** Feed your plants regularly with Dr. Q's Rose & Flower Food to encourage continuous blooming.
- **Mulching:** Apply a layer of mulch seasonally to conserve moisture and regulate soil temperature.

By following these guidelines and selecting the right plants, you can create a stunning flower garden that thrives in even the harshest desert conditions.