

ANNUALS FOR YOUR XERISCAPE

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Characteristics of the Best-Drought Tolerant Annuals

- An annual is a plant that completes its life cycle, from germination to the production of seeds, within one year, and then dies.
- The best-drought tolerant annuals tend to have smaller leaves, which minimize moisture evaporation. The leaves may be waxy to retain moisture, or they may be covered with silvery or white hairs to reflect light.
- Drought-tolerant annuals often have long roots so they can reach for moisture deep in the soil.

How to Grow Drought-Tolerant Annuals

- Even drought tolerant plants need a little extra water when they're getting established, so don't just plant and run. Water well while your annuals are settling in, then watch for signs of wilt as the summer progresses.
- Typically, drought-tolerant annuals require very little care. Most are happy with a deep watering whenever the soil is relatively dry. Most don't tolerate bone dry soil. *Check container plants often!*
- Fertilize regularly throughout the blooming season to support continued flowering. Pinch seedlings at least once or twice to promote bushy growth and deadhead wilted blooms regularly to prevent plants from going to seed early.
- As a general rule, plants that are suitable for sun or shade are also well suited for containers. Just be sure the plants that share a container have similar needs. Don't plant sun-loving plants in the same pots as annuals that need shade, or very drought-tolerant annuals with water loving plants.

Annuals that require 1 to 1 ½ inch of additional water per week (X Rated)

Mexican Floss Flower (Ageratum houstonianum)

- This annual provides continuous bloom for beds, gardens or containers from late spring to frost.
- Species flowers are medium blue, however many cultivars are available in various shades of blue, pink, red, white and bicolor.
- Prompt deadheading of the faded flowers is not necessary, as spent flowers will fall to the ground as they fade to be replaced by new bloom throughout the growing season.
- Mature height 4-18", spread 6-12". Full sun to partial shade.

Snapdragon (Antirrhinum majus)

- Snapdragon flowers bloom throughout cool weather in a wide range of colors and are standouts in both the spring and fall garden.
- The openings of the flowers are snapped tightly shut and require more pressure to open than a honeybee provides, so snapdragons rely on heavier bumblebees for pollination.



- Once the temperature heats up, they may stop blooming. Planting them in partial shade and increasing water will help them make it through the summer.
- Mature height 1-3', spread 12". Full sun, deer resistant.

Marguerite Daisy (*Argyranthemum* spp.)

- This annual flower has daisy-like blooms in cheery Easter and springtime colors.
- In addition to its flowers, Marguerite Daisy has dark green, ferny foliage and grows in a tidy mound, adding lots of garden interest even if it doesn't have any flowers on it.
- Although it thrives in cool weather (and tolerates frosty conditions), it doesn't bloom as well in summer once temperatures spike. It does bounce back into bloom with the arrival of cooler fall temperatures.
- Mature height and spread 15-18", Full sun.

Plumed Cockscomb (*Celosia argentea* var. *plumosa*)

- These are old garden favorites that feature narrow-pyramidal, plume-like flower heads (4-10" long) composed of tiny, densely packed, vividly colored flowers.
- Mass or group in beds, borders or cutting gardens, use as an edging plant or in containers.
- Its foliage tends to remain dense right to the ground, not requiring facer plants in front.
- Not particular as to soil type or pH.
- Mature height 30", spread 12". Full sun, deer resistant.



Impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*)

- Impatiens is the most popular annual bedding plant in the U.S. today. For easy-to-grow, non-stop flowering in heavy shade, it has no equal.
- A large number of cultivars are available, featuring flowers in various shades of pink, rose, red, lilac, purple, orange, white and bicolor versions.
- Showy flowers (1-2 ¼" wide) typically cover the plants from spring to frost.
- Genus name comes from the Latin word *impatiens* meaning impatient, in reference to the violent seed discharge from ripe seed pods.
- Mature height and spread 6-24". Part shade to full shade.

Lobelia (*Lobelia erinus*)

- Commonly called edging lobelia, this plant is noted for its profuse bloom of intensely colored flowers.
- It comes in both upright and trailing varieties, typically growing to 4-9" tall.
- Cultivars are available in blue, violet, purple, red and pink, often with yellow or white eyes. Flowers are attractive to butterflies.
- Trailing forms are best used in hanging baskets, containers or window boxes, upright varieties are best for edging and bedding.
- Mature height 4-9", spread 6-12". Full sun to partial shade, deer resistant.



Nicotiana (*Nicotiana* spp.)

- Commonly called flowering tobacco, this plant is native from southern Brazil to northeastern Argentina.
- It is a somewhat spindly plant that features nocturnally fragrant, long-tubed, yellowish-green to white flowers that open only at night.

- Species plants are rarely available, having been replaced by compact cultivars (to 2' tall) with mostly non-fragrant flowers that open during the day in a variety of colors including red, pink, lime-green and white.
- Mature height 1-2', spread 12". Full sun to partial shade.

Zonal Geranium (*Pelargonium × hortorum*)

- Zonal Geraniums are typically grown as bedding or container plants where they grow in shrubby mounds up to 1-3' tall.
- Rich, medium green, rounded to kidney-shaped leaves usually but not always have dark circular zonal bands which give rise to the common name.
- Flowers appear in clusters atop long flowering stalks throughout the growing season in a wide range of colors, including various shades of red, purple, pink, orange and white.
- Mature height and spread 1-3'. Full sun to partial shade.

Annuals that require ½ to 1 inch of additional water per week (XX Rated)

Spider Flower (*Cleome hassleriana*)

- A fast growing annual with large loose balls of fragrant flowers with long stamens that protrude, giving them a spider-like look.
- Flowers are in shades of pink, purple and white, followed by thin seed pods.
- It tends to be leggy, and is best under planted with lower growing plants.
- Use in beds and borders, cottage gardens, butterfly gardens and containers.
- Mature height 4', spread 24". Full sun to partial shade, deer resistant.



California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)

- California Poppy is the state flower of California. It is native to hillsides, roads and open areas from southern Washington south to northern Mexico.
- Single, cup-shaped flowers are bright orange or less frequently yellow-orange. Cultivars are available in white, pink, red, lilac and purple, as well as double flowering varieties.
- Plants grow in loose, free-branching mounds with finely divided, fern-like, blue-green leaves.
- Mature height and spread 12-18". Full sun to partial shade.

Sweet Potato Vine (*Ipomea batatas*)

- This tuberous rooted tender perennial has been cultivated for its orange-fleshed edible tubers for over 2000 years. Native to tropical America.
- Tubers of the ornamental varieties are edible, but are not as tasty as those of that are bred for food production.
- The more recent purple, chartreuse and variegated leaved cultivars have transformed this vegetable into a popular ornamental foliage plant.
- Mature height 1', spread 8-10'. Full sun.

African Daisy (*Osteospermum* spp.)

- The various species of *Osteospermum* are native to Africa, especially South Africa.
- They do best in well drained soils, as they do not tolerate standing water. Most species tolerate considerable drought.
- Many of the African Daisy cultivars will flower almost continuously throughout the summer. Others flower twice, once in the spring and again later in the summer. Dead-head spent flowers.
- Mature height 12-16", spread 14". Full sun.

Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*)

- This is a rapid-growing, clump-forming grass that produces arching, linear, narrow green leaves to 3' tall and late summer flower spikes that rise above the foliage to 4' tall.
- Used as an annual in Colorado, this grass has plumes of reddish flowers with tan overtones, late summer through fall. Invasive in warm climates.
- The gracefully arching foliage turns brick red in the fall. Great for the garden, this is also an excellent choice for containers.
- Mature height 4', spread 3'. Full sun, deer resistant.



Marigold (*Tagetes* spp.)

- In the 1940's and 50's, annual marigolds were America's favorite bedding plants, prized for their extended show of yellow, orange, maroon, white and bicolor flowers.
- African Marigolds (20-36" tall) have large blossoms, fully double in most varieties.
- French Marigolds (6-18" tall) bear single or double flowers.
- Do not fertilize marigolds during growth, as it stimulates lush foliage at the expense of flowers.
- Mature spread 6-36". Full sun, deer resistant.



Nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*)

- Nasturtiums are warm weather annuals that have been popular in herb gardens, cottage gardens and flower gardens for many years.
- Showy, long-stalked, funnel-shaped, 5-petaled flowers in shades of red, orange, yellow and cream bloom spring-fall. Flowers have a spicy fragrance.
- Some afternoon shade is appreciated in hot summer areas. Avoid fertilization which tends to increase foliage at the expense of flowers.
- Mature height 1-10', spread 3'. Full sun to partial shade, deer resistant.



Garden Verbena (*Verbena × hybrida*)

- A profuse bloom of small five petaled flowers in rounded clusters (to 3" wide) occurs late spring to fall.
- Plants range in size from mat-forming/trailing (to 10" tall) to bushy/upright (to 20" tall).
- Flower colors include blue, violet, purple, rose, dark red, yellow, white and bicolor. Some varieties are fragrant.
- Plants have good heat and drought tolerance, but may decline in periods of prolonged hot and dry conditions.
- Mature height 10-20", spread 1-2', Full sun.

Zinnia (*Zinnia × hybrida*)

- Zinnias are one of the easiest plants to grow, as they grow quickly and bloom heavily. This cross between *Zinnia elegans* and *Zinnia angustifolia* includes popular varieties such as 'Zahara' and 'Profusion'.
- *Zinnia × hybrida* is considered a dwarf group -- they have been bred to be much shorter and bushier than the standard species plants.
- Other than a need for afternoon shade in the warmest climates, zinnias thrive in full sunlight and in rich, well-drained soil.
- Mature height 12-15", spread 8". Full sun.

Annuals that require ¼ to ½ inch of additional water per week (XXX Rated)

Cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*)

- Also known as Bachelor's Button, this annual has a near true blue color and profuse blooms.
- Native to Europe, where they got their common name because they often grew in corn fields, they have naturalized across North America.
- Double, daisy-like flowers in shades of blue, pink, lavender and white appear May to late summer.
- Plants may reseed; deadheading encourages more blooms.
- Mature height 1-3', spread 1-2'. Full sun, deer resistant.



Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)

- This popular, low-maintenance, late-blooming, annual is native to Mexico.
- It is considered a half-hardy annual, although plants may reappear via self-sowing for several years.
- The cultivated varieties appear in shades of pink, purple, yellow and orange, as well as white. Its foliage is finely cut into threadlike segments.
- When flowering, the plant can become top heavy. Best when grown in groups.
- Mature height 1-4', spread 2-3'. Full sun.

Gazania (*Gazania rigens*)

- Narrow leaves are glossy green to silvery green.
- Flowering stems rise 6-10" topped by solitary, daisy-like flowers (3-4" wide) with contrasting center disks.
- Hybrid cultivars come in a variety of colors including yellow, orange, white, pink and striped, often with contrasting color at the bases.
- Blooms summer to fall. Flowers close at night and may only partially open up on cloudy days.
- Mature height and spread 6-14". Full sun, deer resistant.



Globe Amaranth (*Gomphrena* spp.)

- Plants exhibit good drought resistance and heat tolerance once established.
- The true flowers are insignificant, tiny, white to yellow trumpets that are only visible close up.
- It is the bright magenta bracts arranged in globose, papery-textured, clover-like flower heads that provide the real show in a long summer to frost bloom.
- Cultivars include red, pink, purple, lilac, violet and white.
- Mature height 1-2', spread 6-12". Full sun, deer resistant.



Lantana (*Lantana camara*)

- Also known as shrub verbena, Lantana is native to Central and South America.
- Flower colors include white, yellow, orange, red and purple, often mixed in the same cluster. Flowers are attractive to butterflies.
- Leaves are aromatic when bruised.
- Many cultivars and hybrids are available, including dwarf and trailing plants.
- Mature height and spread up to 2' or more.
- Full sun, deer resistant.



Sweet Alyssum (*Lobularia maritima*)



- Sweet Alyssum is one of the easiest annuals to grow. It is a mat-forming plant that produces spreading mounds of well-branched stems.
- Dense clusters of sweetly fragrant, tiny, white 4-petaled flowers cover the foliage mounds from spring to early summer.
- Flowering is often so profuse as to totally hide the foliage. Cultivars expand the flower color choice to include shades of pink, rose, lavender, purple and apricot.
- Mature height 3-9", spread 12". Full sun to partial shade, deer resistant.

Four O'Clocks (*Mirabilis jalapa*)

- This native of Peru blooms from June to frost in shades of pink, rose, red, magenta, yellow and white.
- A curious aspect of this plant is that flowers with different colors grow simultaneously on the same plant. Additionally, an individual flower can be splashed with different colors.
- Flowers open in the late afternoon (around four o'clock) and stay open only until the following morning. Very fragrant and attractive to hummingbirds.
- Mature height and spread 2-3'. Full sun to partial shade.

Petunia (*Petunia × hybrida*)

- Second only to Impatiens in annual bedding plant sales, the petunia is popular due to its ease of culture and non-stop flowering, spring to frost.
- They feature funnel-shaped single to double flowers in virtually all colors except brown and black. Also available in bicolors.
- Cut back plants that become leggy and deadhead to encourage rebloom. If plants decline in the heat of summer, cut back to stimulate later bloom.
- Mature height 9-12", spread 1-3'. Full sun to partial shade.

Joey Mulla Mulla (*Ptilotus exaltatus* 'Joey')

- A native to central Australia, this plant offers exceptional beauty with the benefit of heat and drought tolerance.
- A great choice for mixed containers or in mass landscape plantings.
- Joey has large 3 - 4 inch bottle-brush spikes in bright silver tipped neon pink on attractive oval green foliage.
- Flowers emerge from distinctive silver flower buds, and are excellent for cutting.
- Mature height 24", spread 15". Full sun

Moss rose (*Portulaca grandiflora*)

- This succulent annual has ruffled, rose-like flowers (up to 1" diameter) on slightly ascending stems that form a moss-like foliage mat.
- Flowers bloom summer to frost and come in single, semi-double or double forms in colors including red, rose, orange, yellow, white and pastel shades. Flowers do not open on cloudy or rainy days.
- Cylindrical, fleshy, medium green leaves (to 1" long) appear in clusters along reddish stems.
- Mature height 6-9", spread 9-14". Full sun.

Creeping Zinnia (*Sanvitalia procumbens*)

- Creeping Zinnia is a mat-forming annual that features a summer to frost bloom of ¾" diameter yellow daisy-like flowers.
- Varieties come in single and double flowered forms.
- Creeping stems are covered with zinnia-like leaves (to 2" long), hence the common name.

- Great for container planting and as a groundcover, it forms a solid carpet of bright foliage and flowers all summer long.
- Mature height and spread 4'. Full sun.

Fan Flower (*Scaevola aemula*)

- This Australian native prefers light filtered or dappled sun and thrives in hot and dry summer climates.
- It produces a non-stop bloom of fan-shaped flowers on trailing stems throughout summer to first frost. Available in shades of blue, lavender, pink and white.
- Its foliage tends to remain low and dense right to the ground.
- Great for hanging baskets, container planting and in window boxes.
- Mature height and spread 4'. Partial shade to full sun.

Dusty Miller (*Senecio cineraria*)

- This annual is a popular foliage plant grown for its cool, silvery, woolly leaves which provide excellent contrast to beds, borders and containers.
- Felted, silver-gray leaves (to 6" long) are pinnately cut into irregular oblong segments.
- Foliage is attractive throughout the growing season, often lasting well past the first frost in fall.
- Mature height 12-24" and spread 12". Partial shade to full sun, deer resistant.



Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*)

- Mexican sunflower is native to Mexico and Central America.
- It is a vigorous annual that typically grows in a single season to 4-6' tall.
- Showy sunflowers (to 3" across) with orange to orange-red rays and orange-yellow disks bloom from mid-summer to fall.
- Plants thrive in summer heat and tolerate poor soils. Avoid rich soils which tend to produce weak-stemmed plants with excess foliage.
- Mature height 4-6' and spread 2-3'. Full sun, deer resistant.

