An annual is any plant that completes its life cycle in one growing season. Many of the plants listed in this fact sheet are not true annuals, but are normally treated as such for Oklahoma conditions. Some of these, however, will overwinter most seasons if mulched or grown near a foundation of a house.

Cut Flowers

Below are a few of the more commonly grown species for use in bouquets and arrangements that are equally attractive in the flower garden. See Extension Facts No. 6407 for ideas on flower arrangements and bouquets.

- African daisy (Dimorphotheca sinuata)
- Baby’s-breath (Gypsophila elegans)
- Bells of Ireland (Molucella laevis)
- Celosia [Celosia cristata (Plumosa Group)]
- Cleome (Cleome hasslerana)
- Cornflower (Centaurea cyanus)
- Cosmos (Cosmos bipinnatus and C. sulphureus)
- Fountain grass (Pennisetum setaceum)
- Gerbera daisy (Gerbera jamesonii)
- Globe amaranth (Gomphrena globosa)
- Marigold, African (Tagetes erecta)
- Nasturtium (Tropaeolum majus)
- Pincushion flower (Scabiosa atropurpurea)
- Salvia (Salvia splendens)
- Snapdragon (Antirrhinum majus)
- Statice, Florist’s (Limonium sinatum)
- Strawflower (Helichrysum bracteatum)
- Sunflower, Mexican (Tithonia rotundifolia)
- Tobacco, flowering (Nicotiana alata)
- Zinnia (Zinnia elegans)

Showy Foliage

These plants may be used to lend interest to surrounding flowering plants or for foliage in bouquets. Many of these species are equally striking when planted alone.

- Amaranthus (Amaranthus tricolor)
- Asparagus fern (Asparagus plumosus)

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets are also available on our website at: http://osufacts.okstate.edu

Basil (Ocimum basilicum) many cultivars
Cabbage, ornamental [Brassica oleracea (Capitata Group)]
Castor bean (Ricinus communis)
Coles (Coles x hybridus)
Copperleaf (Acalypha wilkesiana)
Dusty miller (Senecio cineraria)
Joseph’s-Coat (Alternanthera ficoidea)
Kale, ornamental [Brassica oleracea (Acephala Group)]
Kochia (Kochia scoparia f. trichophylla)
Maple, flowering (Abutilon sp.)
New Guinea Impatiens (Impatiens hawkeri)
Polka dot plant (Hypoestes phyllostachya)
Snow-on-the-mountain (Euphorbia marginata)

Large Background

Tall plants help to serve as a background to shorter annuals in the foreground of beds. Also, consider these quick-growing species as barriers to hide unsightly areas.

- Amaranthus (Amaranthus tricolor)
- Candle plant (Cassia alata)
- Castor bean (Ricinus communis)
- Cosmos (Cosmos sulphureus and C. bipinnatus)
- Fountain grass (Pennisetum setaceum)
- Four o’Clock (Mirabilis jalapa)
- Marigold, African (Tagetes erecta)
- Mexican zinnia (Tithonia rotundifolia)
- Spider flower (Cleome hasslerana)
- Summer cypress (Kochia scoparia f. trichophylla)
- Sunflower (Helianthus annuus)
- Zinnia (Zinnia elegans)

Prefer or Tolerate Light Shade

These plants need protection from the sun. Many of these will suffer without protection from harsh Oklahoma conditions.

- Alyssum, sweet (Lobularia maritima)
- Black-eyed Susan vine (Thunbergia alata)
- Browallia (Browallia speciosa)
- Fountain grass (Pennisetum setaceum)
- Impatiens (Impatiens wallerana)
- Impatiens, New Guineas (Impatiens hawkeri)
No other group of plants is as diverse and colorful as bedding plants or annuals.

Annual Flowers for
Specific Uses in Oklahoma

Annuals allow gardeners the means to experiment with relatively inexpensive plants on a seasonal basis.
Garden balsam (Impatiens balsamina)
Lobelia (Lobelia erinus)
Nierembergia (Nierembergia hippomanica var. violacea)
Nasturtium (Tropaeolum majus)
Pansy (Viola x wittrockiana)
Periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus)
Petunia (Petunia x hybrid)
Phlox, annual (Phlox drummondii)
Stock (Matthiola incana ‘Anna’)
Wax begonia (Begonia semperflorens-cultorum)
Wishbone flower (Torenia fournieri)

Edging/Borders/Containers

Plants listed below are relatively short, and thus are useful in foregrounds of beds, containers, and French baskets. Be certain you buy cultivars which do not grow tall. Some of these species are quite variable for their mature heights.

- African daisy (Dimorphotheca sinuata)
- Joseph’s Coat (Alternanthera ficoidea ‘Bettzickiana’)
- Alyssum, sweet (Lobularia maritima)
- Annual hibiscus (Abelmoschus moschatus)
- California poppy (Eschscholzia californica)
- Celosia [Celosia cristata (Plumosa Group)]
- Cockscomb (Celosia cristata)
- Cuphea (Cuphea platycenra)
- Dahlberg daisy (Dys sodia tenuiloba)
- Dahlia, dwarf hybrids (Dahlia hybrids)
- Dusty miller (Senecio cineraria)
- Flossflower (Ageratum houstonianum)
- Garden balsam (Impatiens balsamina)
- Gazania (Gazania rigens)
- Geranium (Pelargonium x hortorum)
- Globe amaranth, dwarf (Gomphrena globosa)
- Globe amaranth, dwarf (Gomphrena globosa)
- Geranium (Pelargonium x hortorum)
- Lantana (Lantana hybrids)
- Lobelia (Lobelia erinus)
- Marigold, dwarf (Tagetes patula)
- Melampodium (Melampodium paludosum)
- Nierembergia (Nierembergia hippomanica var. violacea)
- Pepper, ornamental (Capsicum annuum)
- Periwinkle (Catharanthus roseus)
- Petunia (Petunia x hybrid)
- Phlox, annual (Phlox drummondii)
- Purslane (Portulaca oleracea)
- Rose moss (Portulaca grandiflora)
- Salvia (Salvia splendens)
- Snapdragon, dwarf (Antirrhinum majus)
- Tobacco, flowering (Nicotiana alata)
- Verbena (Verbena x hybrid)
- Wishbone flower (Torenia fournieri)
- Zinnia, dwarf types (Zinnia elegans)
- Zinnia, trailing (Sanvitalia procumbens)

Vines

The species below can be used for screening and can be grown on trellises, fences, and gazebos.

- Black-eyed Susan vine (Thunbergia alata)
- Cup-and-saucer vine (Cobaea scandens)
- Moon flower (Calonyction aculeatum)
- Morning glory (Ipomoea purpurea)
- Nasturtium (Tropaeolum majus)
- Scarlet runner bean (Phaseolus coccineus)

Cold Tolerant Annuals

These plants allow for an extended display long into the fall and early spring.

- Cabbage, ornamental [Brassica oleracea (Capitata Group)]
- Dusty Miller (Senecio cineraria)
- Kale, ornamental [Brassica oleracea (Acephala Group)]
- Pansy (Viola x wittrockiana)
- Snapdragon (Antirrhinum majus)

Dried Flowers/Fruit

The flowers below will dry readily for use in “everlasting” arrangements. Many other annuals can be dried with added effort and materials.

- Ammobium (Alatum grandiflorum)
- Bells of Ireland (Molucella laevis)
- Chinese lantern (Physalis franchetti)
- Cockscomb (Celosia cristata)
- Glove amaranth (Gomphrena globosa)
- Baby’s breath (Gypsophila elegans)
- Fountain grass (Pennisetum setaceum)
- Okra (Abelmoschus esculentus)
- Statice, Florist’s (Limonium sinuatum)
- Strawflower (Helichrysum bracteatum)

The categories listed are merely suggestions for placement of annuals. These categories are by no means comprehensive, but rather common uses for the specific plants that are listed.

Annuals allow gardeners the means to experiment with relatively inexpensive plants on a seasonal basis. When new designs are desired, simply plan these changes for the next growing season. No other group of plants is as diverse and colorful as bedding plants or annuals. Check with personnel in your local greenhouse or garden center for additional advice on what performs well in your area.