

ALL ABOUT ANNUALS

Annuals are herbaceous plants that complete their life cycles from seed to mature bloom to death in one growing season. Many annuals, like petunias and impatiens, produce seeds that develop into new plants the following season.

Some perennials, biennials, tuberous plants, and bulbs including mums, hollyhocks, begonias, and tulips are not cold hardy in USDA Hardiness Zone 7b, which includes most of the Middle Peninsula. Gloucester Point is in Hardiness Zone 8a. They are grown as annuals, lasting for one season only. We let them die back and replace them the next year.

"Cleome, celosia, and petunias will self-seed if planted in full sun."

- Mary Simpson, GEMG Emeritus

Annuals are inexpensive and easy to grow. They display an amazing variety of colorful blooms all summer. Annuals can be used in flowerbeds, cutting gardens, cottage gardens, window boxes, and containers. Annuals are great for filling in spaces after spring-flowering bulbs die back. Some annuals, such as morning glories, are climbers; some, like sweet alyssum, are low-growing plants that produce carpets of color.

Seeds of hardy annuals can be sown directly into garden beds. Some annuals that thrive when started from seed sown directly into the soil include marigolds, nasturtiums, zinnias, and cosmos. Tender annuals like impatiens and coleus must be planted indoors and transplanted outside when the soil and nighttime temperatures are warm enough (about 60° F). In Gloucester County, transplanting time occurs about four weeks after the average last frost date of April 21.

"Annuals add some color and attract butterflies. Buy early for best selection; nurture and protect from frost until suitable to plant - Suzanne Swift, GEMG outside."

SELECTING AND PLANTING ANNUALS

Select plants that are covered with buds rather than open flowers. Water annuals before removing them from their containers. Transplant annuals late in the day or on a cloudy day to keep plants from being burned by the sun. Leave sufficient spacing between plants to allow air circulation and discourage diseases and insect pests. Place plants in the ground at the same level that they growing in the tray or pot. Stagger plant placement to avoid even rows that present little interest to the eye.

"Plant pansies in the fall. Fertilize monthly with a fertilizer that has a higher middle number (e.g., 2-10-2). They will be beautiful by early spring."

- Felicity Ericson, GEMG Emeritus

"Petunias, zinnias, impatiens, and verbena are self-seeders adding later color in the garden for fall." - Nell Jones, GEMG

CARE OF YOUR ANNUALS

Always deadhead or cut off spent blooms and seed pods to keep your annuals blooming longer, especially if you are growing ageratum, calendula, cosmos, marigold, pansy, scabiosa, or zinnia. If your plants get spindly or leggy, pinch off the flowers and new leaves at the ends of the stems to increase fullness.

"Pinch back your new annuals—zinnias, petunias, and salvia—at 4 to 6 inches to promote bushy growth."

Weeding is a boring but necessary chore. To decrease the time you spend in weeding, cover plants with a 2 to 4 inch layer of organic mulch. Besides deterring the growth of weeds, mulch will protect plants from soil temperature extremes; improve the richness of the soil as it decomposes; and help the bed retain moisture. Pine straw, bark nuggets, finely ground bark, and shredded leaves are among the many choices for organic mulch.

Some annuals require more fertilizer that others. Get to know your plants and their nutrient requirements.

Enrich the soil before you plant by adding compost or other organic matter. If you use a commercial chemical fertilizer, follow label instructions to help prevent chemical runoff into local waterways that lead to the Chesapeake Bay.

ANNUALS BEST SUITED TO GLOUCESTER

The following table includes some annuals and tender perennials that are well suited for planting in Gloucester. The plants are organized by their uses.

Most of the annuals and tender perennials listed in the following tables are not native to North America. Some non-native plants can seed or spread aggressively and will invade garden beds and nearby fields and wooded areas, where they will crowd out native species. Introduced species thrive because they have no natural insect or disease enemies.

A few native annuals are aggressive spreaders if not carefully controlled: however, they are not considered invasive. They are classified by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS) as opportunistic native plants.

Some of the listed plants have toxic properties and should not be planted in gardens frequented by children or pets.

Use	Annual			
Containers	Angelonia Angelonia augustifolia	Lantana Lantana camara—non-hardy cultivars		
	Bacopa Sutera cordata and grandiflora cultivars	Million Bells Calibrachoa		
	Coleus Solenostemon sauttellarioides	Pansy Viola x wittrockiana		
	Geranium Pelargonium	Petunia Petunia x hybrida		
	Impatiens (all types) Impatiens walleriana	Sweet Potato Vine Ipomoea batatas		
Edging	Sweet Alyssum Lobularia maritima	Periwinkle—VincaMyrtle Vinca major, Vinca minor		
	Dahlborg Daisy—Golden Fleece— Thymophylla tenuiloba (Dyssodia tenuiloba)	Petunia Petunia x hybrida		
	Dianthus—PinksCarnation Dianthus spp. D.chinensis - China pinks D. barbatus - Sweet William	Portulaca—Rock Rose Portulaca grandiflora		
	Dwarf French Marigold <i>Tagetes patula</i>	Verbena <i>Verbena x hybrida</i>		
	Lobelia <i>Lobelia erinus</i>	Wax or Bedding Begonia Begonia semperflorens		

ANNUALS BEST SUITED TO GLOUCESTER (continued)

Use	Annual			
Mixed Borders	Ageratum Ageratum houstonianum Aggressive spreaders	French Marigold Tagetes patula		
	Garden Balsam Impatiens balsamina	Petunia Petunia x hybrida		
	Cleome - Spider Flower Cleome (Sterile cultivars available)	Salvia—Scarlet Sage Salvia splendens		
	Cosmos Cosmos bipinnatus	Snapdragon Antirrhinum majus		
	Lantana <i>Lantana camara—non-hardy</i>	Zinnia Zinnia elegans		
	Dusty Miller Senecio cineraria			
Fences and Trellises	Blue Trumpet Vine—Thunbergia Thunbergia grandiflora	Morning Glory Ipomoea pupurea		
	Gourds Cucumber family	Scarlet Runner Kennedia prostrate		
	Moonflower Ipomoea alba	Sweet Pea Lathyrus odoratus		
Screen Plants	Celosia—Cockscomb (Tall) Celosia, Plumosa group	Marigold (Tall) Tagetes erecta—African Group		
	Cleome—Spider Flower Cleome	Zinnia (Tall) Zinnia elegans		
Low Borders	Celosia—Cockscomb (Dwarf) Celosia, Cristata group)	Pansy Viola x wittrockiana		
	Dahlia (Dwarf) Dahlia x hybrida	Hybrid Petunia <i>Petunia x hybrida</i>		
	Marigold (Dwarf) Tagetes patula	Zinnia (Dwarf) Zinnia—Button Box Series		
	French Marigold Tagetes patula			
Height	Bachelor's Button—Cornflower Centaurea cyanus	Flowering Tobacco—Nicotiana Nicotiana alata		
	China Aster Callistephus chinensis	Mealycup Sage—Salvia Salvia farinacea 'Victoria'		
	Dahlia (Bedding) Dahlia x hybrida	Pincushion Flower—Scabiosa Scabiosa caucasica		
	Black-eyed Susan or Gloriosa Daisy <i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Pot Marigold Calendula officinalis		

"The hand tools I use are often green, metallic, or brown. They become hard to find in bushes or weeds. I have found that either tying a piece of bright colored plastic or painting the handle red helps me keep track of my tools, and I don't have to wait until plants die back in the winter to find them."

— Sally Moore, GEMG



ANNUALS BEST SUITED TO GLOUCESTER (continued)

Use	Annual			
Full Sun	Angelonia Angelonia augustifolia	Larkspur Consolida ambigua		
	Bachelor's Button—Cornflower Centaurea cyanus	French Marigold Tagetes patula		
	Blanket Flower—Gaillardia Gaillardia pulchella	Morning Glory Ipomoea purpurea		
	Celosia—Cockscomb Celosia, Cristata group	Petunia Petunia x hybrida		
	Cleome—Spider Flower Cleome	Portulaca — Moss Rose Portulaca grandiflora		
	Cosmos <i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	Salvia—Scarlet Sage Salvia splendens		
	False Heather—Hawaiian Heather Cuphea hyssopifolia	Shasta Daisy Leucanthemum x superbum Chrysanthemum x superbum		
	Four O' Clock Mirabilis jalapa	Sunflower (Dwarf) Helianthus annus hybrids		
	Geranium Pelargonium x hortorum or peltatum	Zinnia Zinnia elegans		
Shade	Caladium Bicolor Caladium x hortulanum	Johnny-Jump-Up Viola tricolor		
	Cardinal Flower—Lobelia Lobelia cardinalis	Sapphire Flower Browallia speciosa		
	Coleus Solenostemon sauttellarioides	Wax or Bedding Begonia Begonia semperflorens		
	Impatiens (all types) Impatiens walleriana			

Adapted from Virginia Cooperative Extension, Publication 426-600 Master Gardener Handbook, A Guide to Gardening in Virginia and GMGs' experiences

"Wave petunias are excellent annuals. They are very colorful, are long blooming, and spread nicely over a moderate area."

- Florace Arnold, GEMG Emeritus

"The larkspur spikes of delicate white, violet, pink, and even red flowers make a great display in drifts or as a background to small annuals. As larkspur self seeds, there will always be some in the garden. The trick is to recognize them as flowers and not pull them up as weeds when they first start growing in late spring."

- Noel Priseler, GEMG Emeritus

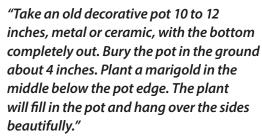


FACTS AND GROWING TIPS ON SOME OF OUR FAVORITE ANNUALS

Hundreds of new annual cultivars are developed each year. All-America Selections (AAS) is an independent, not-for-profit organization that impartially tests and introduces the best new varieties of garden plants developed each year in North America. Some classic and new AAS award winners, as well as favorites of Gloucester Master Gardeners, are described in the table on the following pages.

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Ageratum Ageratum houstonianum	Tender annual with fluffy blue-violet color. Both dwarf and tall varieties. Blooms from May to frost. 'Blue Danube' is a favorite.	Dwarf varieties are great for borders, edgings, rock gardens, window boxes, and small beds. Tall varieties are good for cut flowers and may be dried for arrangements.	Start seeds indoors for transplanting or sow directly in open ground after April 21 and where they will remain throughout the season. Plant in full sun or semishade in fertile, welldrained soil.	Mulch to protect during the hot summer. Deadhead for continuous blooming. Frost tender Some cultivars spread aggressively.
Angelonia Angelonia augustifolia	Known as summer snap- dragon. It has dozens of 1-inch blooms in white, blue, pink, and lavender on glossy green foliage. Blooms all summer into fall. New for 2019: Angelface® 'Cascade Blue.'	Good choice for flowerbeds and containers	Plant in mid spring in full sun in moderate to dry location.	Shear plants back 50 percent in mid- summer for heavy re-bloom in 2 to 3 weeks. Heat-loving plant Deadheading not necessary.
Bacopa Sutera cordata and grandiflora cultivars	Small snowflake-like flowers in white, blue, and pink peak out from the trailing stems of this plant. Blooms late spring through the summer. New for 2015: 'Cabana,'a jumbo white.	This annual is best suited to be grown in containers. Excellent for trailing over the edge of mixed patio pots or in hanging baskets	Plant in mid spring in container in potting soil in full to partial sun.	Routinely pinch back growing stems to keep plants shapely. Fertilize every two weeks.

Tagetes patula



- Jodie Sholtis, GEMG

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Begonia - Wax Begonia semperflorens	Smooth, waxy green or reddish-brown leaves. Flowers are shades of red, pink, salmon, and white. Blooms from May to frost. Cocktail series has bronze leaves, which grow better in sunny areas than other begonias. New for 2021: Double Delight® 'Blush Rose' and 'Primrose' (yellow)	Great for borders and container plantings	Start seeds indoors for transplanting or buy plants in packs at garden centers for planting when night temperature reaches 60 degrees. Plant in full sun or partial shade in rich, moist, slightly acidic soil.	Mulch to protect during the hot summer. Must have good humidity. Can be lifted in fall and potted as indoor plant.
Coleus Solenostemon sauttellarioides or Plectranthus sauttellarioides	Tender perennial treated as an annual. Brightly patterned foliage plant that provides showy colors for shaded areas. Grows up to 24 inches. Leaf colors include brilliant red-mahogany, green, yellow, white, blue, rose, and more as the cultivars increase. New for 2021: Color Blaze® 'Royale Pineapple Brandy' 2020 AAS Ornamental Winner: Coleus 'Main Street Beale Street' New for 2019: Colorblaze® 'Rediculus'TM, 'Torchlight'TM, 'Sedona Sunset'TM	Great for containers or for under-plantings. Also used as a houseplant	Grows easily from seed outdoors after temperatures reach 70 degrees. Plant in bright shade of tall trees or in dappled light—no direct sun. Seeds can be planted inside anytime.	To encourage branching, pinch out the top 3 to 4 inches of the lead stem. Remove flower spikes as they start up to prevent the plant from becoming straggly. Blooms from midspring until killed by frost
Dusty Miller Senecio cineraria	Silvery-white foliage with yellow flower. Cut off flower to encourage leaf growth. Grows from 6 inches to 3 feet tall. Heat and drought resistant. "Silver Lace" is a delicate-looking cultivar.	Best in containers, bedding or mixed borders	Plant after soil is above 60 degrees in sun or part shade. Grows in poor but well drained soil. Plant 2 inches apart.	Continue to pinch out top to encourage the plant to fill out throughout the season. Shear occasionally to prevent legginess. Will make a nice showing until frost.

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Impatiens Impatiens walleriana	Most varieties range in height from 6 inches to 2 feet with single or double flowered forms. The foliage is shiny green to reddish or variegated green and yellow green. The flowers come in many shades of pinks, reds, and purple as well as white and bicolor. Blooms from May to frost. 2019 AAS National winner: SunPatiens® 'Vigorous Shell Pink' New for 2021: SunPatiens® 'Compact Hot Pink' and	Loves shade; grows well under trees	Plant in mid spring in extreme shade in good loamy soil.	Very pest-free and requires very little maintenance to promote blooms
'Joey'-Pink Mulla Mulla Ptilotus exaltatus	'Compact Orchid Blue' A short-lived annual native to Australia. Large 3- to 4-inch bottle-brush spikes in neon pink on attractive silvery foliage. Grows 12-18 inches tall and blooms all summer. "Joey"- silver-pink blooms with silver-pink foliage.	Mounding plant which is very heat and drought tolerant. Use as a specimen pot plant, an accent plant in a mixed container, or a landscape plant.	Plant in mid spring in full sun in average, well-drained soil.	Allow to dry out before watering.
French Marigold Tagetes patula	Most easily grown and popular annual. Grows from 6 inches to 4 feet tall. Color ranges from bright yellow to orange and red. Has strong scented foliage and blooms from May to frost. 2019 AAS Flower Winner: 'Marigold Big Duck Gold' 2019 AAS Flower Winner: 'Super Hero Spry'	Great for cut flowers. Plant dwarf French marigolds with vegetables because of their pest-repellent properties. Some forms exude substance from the roots that rid the garden of nematodes (soil pests).	Plant in late spring in sun or part shade. Blooms best in hot sunny location Loves poor, rather than rich soil.	Nearly trouble-free. Will bloom from early summer to frost if spent blossoms are removed.

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Million Bells Calibrachoa group	Look like small petunias but have strong, wiry stems, not easily broken and not bothered by tobacco budworms. New for 2019: Superbells® Cardinal Star TM , Double Chiffon TM , Evening Star TM New for 2021: Superbells® Coral Sun TM	Excellent for containers but less successful as bedding plants	Plant in mid spring in full sun or light shade. Will flower from spring to frost	Come in a wide variety of colors Faded flowers drop cleanly, not requiring dead-heading. Will flower from spring to frost.
Morning Glory Ipomoea spp.	Ornamental vining plant with violet, blue, white, or pink flowers. 'Heavenly Blue' is a favorite.	Great for climbing over fences and objects like tree stumps	Plant in mid spring in full sun. If starting from seed, soak seeds overnight in water and abrade to hasten germination.	Mulch to protect during the hot summer. Common morning glory, Ipomoea purpurea, and ivy- leaved morning glory, Ipomoea hederacea, are moderately invasive.
Nasturtium Tropaeolum majus	Over 50 varieties— most are climbers. The entire plant has a spicy, peppery, yet delicate pungent flavor much like cress. 2019 AAS Flower Win- ner: 'Nasturtium Baby Rose' AAS 2020 Winner: 'Tip Top Rose'	Useful herb for salads/sandwiches; seeds make a great snack in winter and can be substituted for capers. They are good plants for organic vegetable gardeners as they attract aphids away from susceptible fruits/vegetables.	Plant in mid spring in full sun in well-drained location. Prefer sandy soil Sow seed in fall for winter-spring bloom.	Add nitrogen fertilizer sparingly.
Ornamental Cabbage and Kale Brassica oleracea— Acephala group	The cabbages come with purple or white centers. Red, pink, and white cultivars.	Grow well from fall to spring	Grow in early fall in full sun in fertile, well-drained, alkaline soil	Require little care. Slugs and snails are frequent pests.
Pansy Viola x wittrockiana	The flowers look like monkey faces. Colors include blue, apricot, white, purple, red, or orange. V. odorata 'Duchesse du Parme' and 'Lady Hume Campbell' are fragrant.	Great in borders, beds, and con- tainers	Plant in fall as soon as weather cools and again in spring.	Pansies are very hardy, withstanding temperatures down to 15 degrees if mulched. Deadhead to encourage new blooms. Will fade in June, as they cannot tolerate heat.

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Petunia Petunia x hybrida	Accounts for 50% of all annuals grown. Plants have single or double flowers and most colors, including bi-colors. 2021 AAS Flower Winner: Supertunia® 'Royal Velvet' 2019 AAS Flower Winner: Petunia Wave® 'Carmine Velour' 2017 AAS Flower Winner Petunia 'Evening Scentsation'	Use for edging, mass bedding, in containers and hanging baskets, or for accent. Multi-floras are more heat and disease resistant.	Plant in spring. Adaptable to rich or poor soils, moist or dry conditions, full sun or part shade	Use newer varieties that are resistant to Botrytis rot. Plant in well-drained soil. Deadhead frequently to encourage new blooms.
Salvia —Scarlet Sage Salvia splendens	Ornamental sage. Comes in many colors. Best known is scarlet sage with red blossoms that appear in early summer and last until frost. Salvia Summer Jewel TM Lavender, 2016 AAS Flower Winner Salvia Summer Jewel TM White, 2015 AAS Bedding Plant Winner Salvia Summer Jewel TM Pink, 2012 AAS Bedding Plant winner Salvia Summer Jewel TM Pink, 2011 AAS Bedding Plant Winner	Great in mass bedding. Goldfinch love the seeds in the fall.	Grow best in mid spring in full sun	When young plants are 6 to 8 inches high, pinch back to encourage lush growth.
Sweet Alyssum Lobularia maritima	Profuse white or purple blooms over a long period. Generally pest resistant. Grows to 4 inches in height and has a sweet scent. Heat tolerant variety: 'Snow Princess'	Effective in masses in infor- mal beds, or in tubs or hanging baskets	For early bloom, sow seed as soon as ground is workable.	Add compost to soil before sowing. Shear plant tops every few weeks to remove fading flowers and produce more blooms.

Viola x wittrockiana

Plant	Description	Garden Uses	When / Where to Plant	Care
Sweet Pea Lathyrus odoratus	Vining plant with masses of fragrant, pea-shaped flowers in every color but yellow. Look for heat resistant varieties. New for 2019: 'Zinfandel' Modern variety: 'April in Paris' Heirloom: 'America', from 1896	Great for wrap- ping around small objects and for containers	In mild winter areas, sow seed in the fall.	Does not tolerate dry soil and should be well mulched. Requires soil enriched with compost. The more you cut sweet peas, the better they bloom.
Sweet Potato Vine Ipomoea batatas	Annual trailing vine that comes in chartreuse, black, and tricolor. No flowers. New for 2019: 'Sweet Caroline' TM 'Kiwi' TM and 'Raven' TM	Great in containers for trailing effect	Plant in early sum- mer. Requires full to partial sun in average soil	Very low maintenance
Zinnia <i>Zinnia elegans</i>	Many varieties in varied heights, flower size, and colors. 2021 AAS Flower Winner: Zinnia 'Profusion' red-yellow bicolor 2020AAS Flower Winner: 'Holi Pink' New for 2019: 'Raspberry Sorbet' 2018 AAS Flower Winner: 'Queeny Lime Orange'	Great as cut flower	Sow seeds only when soil is warm. Grows in almost any soil and will survive our hot summer weather	Pinching is not necessary; however, cut off dead flowers to maintain attractiveness. As you cut the flowers, the plant branches freely.

"Shade gardens are a challenge for color but the annuals—impatiens, begonias, and coleus—come to the rescue. And one advantage to the shade garden is fewer weeds!" - Kay Williamson, GEMG

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Notes:	