



Yolo County Master Gardeners
Fall Planting Guide for Flowers

Even though it is still warm, now is the time to begin preparations for the winter garden. Prepare planting beds and make out a shopping list. Flowers planted in the fall in the Central Valley will have time before the weather cools to develop better root systems before flowering in winter and spring. Because their root systems will have been established in their permanent locations throughout the winter, they will have a longer bloom season than annuals planted in the spring in cooler soil.

Planting times vary depending upon the variety of flower. However, in the Central Valley, the prime planting time in fall is from early September to mid-October. If planting seeds, it is sometimes better to begin earlier in the season to give the seeds time to germinate using the late summer heat.

Thoroughly prepare the soil prior to planting. Add approximately 10-20% organic matter in the form of homemade or commercial compost, well-rotted horse manure, or planting mix. Add to that the correct amount of a complete 5% nitrogen fertilizer (5-10-10) by following the instructions on the package label. A complete fertilizer has nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K). Incorporate the amendment and fertilizer to a depth of 8-10 inches, then rake the surface smooth. Water so that the soil will be moist, but not soggy at planting time.

Plant seeds or transplants, and keep the newly planted bed moist until the roots have taken hold (usually 10 days to 2 weeks). Avoid over-watering which can cause fungal diseases or drowned plants. About a month after planting, fertilize again.

The following is a list of some prime annuals and perennials for a colorful show through the winter and into the spring:

Name	Description	Cultural Tips
Bachelor's button <i>(Centaurea cyanus)</i>	Upright from 12-30", narrow gray-green foliage & 1-1 1/2" flowers in blue, pink, red and white.	Prefers light soil; space adequately to promote branching and minimize powdery mildew. Full sun. Good cut flowers. Tall varieties need staking.
Calendula <i>(Calendula officinalis)</i>	Bushy upright plants 12-30". Abundant blooms like double daisies to 4" across in white, cream, orange, yellow and apricot.	Easily propagated by seeds or transplants. Full sun. Good cut flower. Edible petals. Powdery mildew can be a problem. Do not overhead water.
Chrysanthemum <i>(C. multicaule, C. paludosum)</i>	Buttery yellow daisies of <i>C. multicaule</i> grow 1-1 1/4" across on 6" stems above mat of green foliage. <i>C. paludosum</i> has 1-1 1/2" flower heads with white rays and yellow centers on 8-10" stems, dark green leaves.	Buy transplants. Give full sun, average water. Plants may live a second year. Excellent for edging, hanging baskets, and containers.



Dianthus

(*D. carophyllus*,
D. barbatus,
D. plumarius)

Annuals, biennials and perennials often grown as annuals. Fringed flowers 1/2-1" wide in intense solid colors or in combinations of pink, purple, red and white. Plants 6-24" tall. Bloom from spring to early summer into fall.

Buy transplants to ensure bloom in current season. Give full sun, light soil. Don't overwater. Compact types are good edging. Taller varieties make good cut flowers.

English Daisy

(*Bellis perennis*)

Perennials often treated as annuals. Pink, rose, red and white double flowers 1-3" across bloom on 4-8" stems above rosettes of bright green leaves. Blooms fall to spring with fewer flowers in coldest months.

Give good soil, much moisture, light shade. Good edging or bedding plant. Blends well with bulbs.

Flowering cabbage and kale

(*Brassica*)

Grown for colorful leaf rosettes. Some turn bright purple or rose with onset of cold weather (best color below 40 degrees); others are marked with white or cream. Cabbages are 8-12" tall with wavy leaves. Kales may be compact and fringed or grow to 18" and be deeply serrated.

Full sun. Control cabbage worm with *Bacillus thuringiensis*. Many types available from specialty seed catalogs. Remove when plants bolt in mid-to-late winter.

Forget-me-not

(*Myosotis sylvatica*,
often sold as *M. alpestris*)

Tiny, blue carmine or white flowers cover upper portion of 6-12" stems. Leaves are soft, hairy. Bloom begins late winter, early spring.

Easily sown in place. Needs moist soil, partial shade. Blues combine nicely with warmer colors such as coral, orange or yellow. Attractive interplanted with bulbs. Plants self-sown and may become weedy when conditions are right.

Globe candytuft

(*Iberis umbellata*)

Busy, free blooming plants 6-15" high (depending on variety), with flattened globes of tiny flowers. Lance shaped leaves to 3" long. Available in pastel rose, pink, lilac, salmon, white or intense shades of red and purple.

Sow seed in fall or set out plants in late winter (plants are scarce in fall). Plants are heat sensitive and will stop blooming in hot weather, or if soil dries. Partial shade. Good for edging, in rock gardens.

Larkspur

(*Consolida ajacis*;
also: *Delphinium ambiguum*)

Upright, branching plants 1-5 feet tall with ferny foliage and dramatic bloom spikes. Delphinium like 1-1 1/2" flowers in white, blue, lilac, pink, salmon and carmine. Peak bloom in spring.

Sow seeds where plants are to go. Chill seed for one week before planting. Best in fertile, well-drained soil. Partial shade. Excellent cut and dried flowers.

Nemesia

(*N. strumosa*)

Small (3/4") flowers in clusters 3-4" long in snapdragon shapes. Colors vary from bright jewel tones to soft pastels; also some bicolors. Plants are from 7-8".

Frost tender. Cut back after first flush of bloom. Full sun. blooms best in cool weather; remove faded flowers to prolong bloom.

Pansy, viola

(*V. x wittrockiana*,
V. cornuta,
V. tricolor)

Pansies and violas (*V. cornuta*) come in many color variations from plain to blotched. Pansies have large flowers 2-4" across; violas are about 1-2". Johnny-jump-ups (*V. tricolor*) are small (3/4"), normally purple and yellow bicolors. Plants grow to 8".

Buy transplants. Pinch leggy plants to encourage new growth. Plants last longer if protected from hottest sun. Full sun or part shade. Remove spent flowers to prolong bloom, particularly for pansies.

<p>Poppy (<i>Papaver nudicaule</i>, <i>P. rhoeas</i>)</p>	<p>Iceland poppy (<i>P. nudicaule</i>) is a perennial grown as an annual. 3” crepe-papery flowers bloom on slender, hairy 1-2 ft. stems. Slightly fragrant flowers in cream, yellow, orange and pink. Shirley poppy (<i>P. rhoeas</i>) is an annual with 2-5 ft. slender, hairy stems. Flowers are 2” or more across with translucent petals in shades of red, pink, white, orange and bicolors.</p>	<p>Set out plants of Iceland poppy. Picking encourages bloom. Shirley poppy best sown in place; can start with transplants (available in late fall). Need good drainage, full sun. All are good cut flowers.</p>
<p>Primrose (<i>Primula x polyantha</i>, <i>P. obconica</i>, <i>P. malacoides</i>)</p>	<p>English primrose (<i>P. x polyantha</i>) has strappy leaves and clusters of brightly colored flowers on 3-12” stems. <i>P. obconica</i> has roundish hairy leaves and large clusters of 1 ½-2” flowers on 10-12” stalks. Fairy primrose (<i>P. malacoides</i>) has lobed leaves and lacy flowers on stems 12-25” tall. Colors include lavender, pink, red, rose and white.</p>	<p>Partial shade. Well drained fertile soil. Prefer to be kept moist, but not wet. English primrose and <i>P. obconica</i> can be kept as perennials, but may develop spider mites in the central valley in the dry summer heat.</p>
<p>Snapdragon (<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>)</p>	<p>Many colors and several forms. Standard one has upper and lower jaws. Newer types include bell and double-bell-shaped flowers. Heights range from 6”- 3 feet.</p>	<p>Plants bloom in winter if buds form before night temperatures drop below 50 degrees. To reduce chance of rust, do not water overhead. Full sun. Tall varieties excellent for cutting.</p>
<p>Stock (<i>Matthiola incana</i>)</p>	<p>Old-fashioned plants with clusters of single or double 1” flowers in cream, pink, lavender, purple, red and white. Flowers born on 1-3 ft. spikes; tall ones good for cutting. They have a spicy-sweet fragrance.</p>	<p>Plant early so buds form before nights turn chilly; otherwise, bloom is late. Full sun. Plant tall types for cut flowers. Dwarf varieties good in front border or in pots.</p>
<p>Sweet Alyssum (<i>Lobularia maritima</i>)</p>	<p>Trailing, low growing plants to 6” have tiny but profuse fragrant flowers in dense clusters. Available in white, pink, purple and pastel shades.</p>	<p>Plant transplants in fall, or grow from seed started in late summer. Easy, blooms from seed in 6 weeks. To keep plants fresh, shear after 4 weeks of bloom. Sun or light shade. Useful for bulb cover, border edging, and containers. Easily self sows. Flowers attract bees.</p>
<p>Sweet Pea (<i>Lathyrus odoratus</i>)</p>	<p>Intensely fragrant flowers on vines 4” to 8 ft. tall or in bush form. Dozens of varieties available in shades of blue, pink, purple, salmon, red, white, cream and bicolors. Heirloom varieties have more powerful fragrance.</p>	<p>Grow best when planted from seed. Sow in mid- to late September. Soak seed for a few hours before planting. Provide trellis or strings for vining types. Bush types don’t require staking. Full sun. Magnificent flowers for bouquets.</p>
<p>Toadflax (<i>Linaria marrocana</i>)</p>	<p>Delicate-looking snapdragon-like flowers in pastel and bright colors form along upright stems. Narrow medium green leaves.</p>	<p>Easy from seed. Plant in masses for best effect. Full sun or light shade.</p>

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