

# Annuals and Perennials

**Objective:** to explain the different growth habits and uses of annual and perennial plants.

**Training Materials:** samples of annuals and perennials.

- **Annual** – germinates, grows, flowers, and produces seed in one year. Examples are petunias, salvia and sunflowers. Annuals come in a large variety of colours and most will bloom non-stop throughout the summer. They die with the fall frost and must be replanted each year.

Annuals are used in combinations to create eye catching borders or accents in the summer landscape. They are also ideally suited to growing in containers and hanging baskets.

Annual flowers are easy to replace if several die in the garden. Once an annual planting is established it should crowd out weeds, but until the plants fill in, the beds must be weeded weekly. Many have lush tropical growth that requires regular water. Most annuals will stop blooming if they are allowed to dry out, but will recover and begin to bloom again, once they are watered regularly.

- **Biennial** – A plant with a two-year life cycle. It germinates and grows one year, flowers, produces seed and dies the second year. Foxgloves are biennial.

- **Perennial** – bloom, die back and come up again the following year. Examples are hosta, daylily and phlox. The benefits of perennials are that they are cost effective once established and often require less water than annuals. Most varieties can be dug up and divided to create more plants every three or four years.

Perennials encompass a wide variation of plants with every colour and texture and height imaginable. One big difference between annuals and perennials is that most perennial plants have a shorter blooming period, so care must be taken to select perennials that bloom during different times of the season in order to have flowers throughout the year.

Many perennials are chosen not only for their flower, but for their foliage colour or texture which brings many different shapes and forms to the garden.

Perennials are used in carefully planned borders, but many are now being used to bring a different texture to shrub and evergreen plantings.

- **Tender perennials** are perennial plants that will not withstand a Canadian winter.

Phormium is a tender perennial and is treated as an annual in our climate. Dedicated gardeners can dig up and over winter tender perennials indoors with some success.

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