

Keeping Your Pansies Blooming All Winter

Have you recently planted a colorful bed of pansies in your landscape with the hope that it will look as lovely as the commercial plantings that you see all over town? If so, you are not alone. Pansies are one of the most popular annuals for fall and winter landscapes and are particularly well suited for Central Florida gardens. Assuming that you chose healthy plants with strong root systems and prepared the soil well at planting time, there are just a few more steps you need to follow to assure months of bountiful blooms.

Fertilize - Pansies are cool weather annuals, their fertilizer needs differ from those of summer annuals. A general purpose fertilizer such as 10-10-10 can be applied at planting at about 1 once per foot. Fertilize again about a week after transplanting, then once more in early winter. Applying a slow release fertilizer is more environmental friendly and economical.

Mulch- Even though pansies like cool weather and will generally bounce back after even extended periods of very cold weather, they still benefit from mulching. Carefully spreading a layer of mulch around your plants will help protect them from freeze injury when temperatures occasionally dip. As temperatures rise in the spring, this mulch can be removed.

Remove Spent Flowers- Pansies are heavy bloomers. To keep them blooming, regularly remove old faded flower blossoms throughout the growing season. This may seem like a tedious job, but it is important to prevent the development of seed pods which will sap your plants of energy. It will also reduce the chance of fungal blight disease.

Prune - Ideally, the plants that you chose should be robust and compact. If your pansies start to look lanky and stretched out, pinch them back. This will encourage strong, new growth. You may have to forfeit some blooms for a short while but you will be more than repaid later in increased flowering.

Water- When the weather is cold, it is easy to forget that garden plants, particularly winter annuals, need regular watering. Rainfall may be adequate for much of the winter, but if there is no rainfall for 10 days or more, pansies, particularly those planted in pots or raised beds, should be watered.

Following these five simple steps should help assure a bountiful and colorful display of pansy blossoms all winter long. Words of wisdom; always remember to practice the nine Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ principles when working in the landscape.

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