

Plan For Spring by Planting in the Fall

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Angelina County residents are enjoying the cooler evenings of fall. Spring seems a very long time away. You may think it is time to put hoes and shovels away, but now is the time to plant if you want to have color for the gray winter months and a beautiful spring garden.

Area nurseries and garden centers have cool weather annuals such as pansies, dianthus, snapdragons, ornamental kale, and viola in stock. These plants will survive our winter frosts.

Pansies produce some flowers in fall and winter followed by peak flowering in spring. Dianthus comes in white, pink or red and grows best in cool conditions. Ornamental cabbage and kale are grown for their colorful foliage. Snapdragons come in a rainbow of colors and have bloomed very well in our area the past few springs.

Prepare the soil by digging, mixing in compost and a balanced fertilizer. Cottonseed meal may be added for a source of nitrogen during the winter rains. Plant as late as November, using a flower bed that can be left undisturbed until late spring as some cool weather plants bloom into May.

Poppies and larkspur seed must be planted in late fall for early spring blooms, requiring cool weather to germinate. Larkspur is an old garden favorite that provides tall, spiky effects in the garden. Bunny Bloom Larkspur, a Texas Superstar selection, is available in blue, pink, and white. Sow seeds on top of a well-prepared bed but do not cover with dirt. Tamp down the soil with the back of a hoe or pat down with your hands.

Do not mulch. Poppies must have cool, long nights and light to germinate. Larkspurs benefit from a little lime in the prepared bed.

Spring flowering bulbs, such as daffodils, must be planted in fall to bloom in the spring. Choose good quality bulbs, because the flower buds are already formed when the bulbs are planted. Daffodils look much better if they are not planted in straight rows. Be sure to plant in an area of your garden that is a little isolated because bulbs can be damaged by stray shovels or hoes.

Gardeners who spend time planting now will be greatly rewarded next spring.