

How To Buy Quality Bedding Plants & Annual Color

Introduction:

When I worked in retail nurseries, I used to watch people pick out the worst looking plants! To the dismay of my boss, I would usually pull them aside and give them a quick lesson on how to pick out quality. I am going to do the same for you right now!

When you go shopping for annual color, or any bedding plants, try and buy from a known supplier such as a nursery or garden center. You can buy plants at the drug or grocery store these days, but the quality tends not to be as reliable. Plus, drug stores and markets really don't care if you have success with your purchase or not.

A known garden center does care and they want you to have the best experience as possible, but even they can have poor quality at times. So buy your plant material carefully, and make sure you get the best plants your money can buy.



1. Be Picky

When you walk into a nursery or garden center, it's hard not to be taken in with the displays and colorful plants. They are counting on you making an impulse or emotional purchase. But take a minute and **really look** at what you are buying, and how the plant material in the displays is looking.

- Do the plants look healthy and well cared for?
- Are there a lot dead leaves and flowers on the plants?
- Does the display look kept up and neat?
- Is the plant material full of color, but old and overgrown?

Take a look at two different display tables in the pictures below. Both tables are in the same nursery, in fact they were side by side. But notice how much nicer the plants on the right look to the ones on the left!

Click on pictures for a larger image



2. What is the difference?

The plant material on the left is overgrown, it has lots of dead leaves and flowers, and overall the plants look past their prime.

The plant material on the right is nice and compact.

- The flats of plants are not overgrown
- They are uniform in growth
- They are clean and neat
- They look super healthy
- They are **not** in full flower!

This is very important! You want to buy plants with lots of buds, perhaps a flower or two open so you can see the color, but mostly not. You want to enjoy your plants as long as possible, and with bedding plants and annuals, you only have a few months to enjoy them, so get plants **before** they are in full flower.

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3. Examples

Let's take a look at some examples close up.

The pack of pansies on the left in these two pictures is old and way overgrown. It has spent a lot of energy flowering. You **could** clean these plants up, cut them back, fertilize them, and then plant them and they would grow OK. But why should you have to clean up old plant material?

The center plant in these pictures is **perfect**. This is exactly what you want. It has nice healthy growth, with lots of buds forming, and a few open flowers so you can see its color and pattern. These plants are going to perform fantastic for you once they get in the ground.

The pack on the far right is still too small. If you were to pop one of those plants out of its cell, you would find a very small root system. In fact the root system was so small on these plants that it wasn't able to hold the rootball together yet.

If you want to check the roots, you can do this in the nursery if you want to, you won't harm the plant as long as you're very careful and put the plant back correctly. Overall, the plants on the right are not ready to be planted out yet. They need a few more weeks to mature and get established.

Click on pictures for a larger image



4. More Examples

Let's look at a few more examples of quality plant material versus poor plant material.

Click on pictures for a larger image





5. What did I go home with?

From the two tables shown in the pictures in # 1 and #2, here is the plant material I was able to pick out. It's really nice, and I am going to have great looking plants for a long time because I was picky!

- So take your time when shopping
- Don't be blinded by the color and beauty of the displays
- Look at the health and size of the plant material
- If you just can't find anything good, go and look elsewhere, you'll be much better off in the long run

Now it is time to plant your purchases, and the next tutorial is about [How To Plant Bedding Plants & Annual Color](#).

Click on pictures for a larger image

