

The cutting garden

Make part of your garden into an area where you can grow flowers to sell



Choose a sunny part of your garden that receives six hours of sunshine each day, as most flowers need sun to grow well. The soil must drain well and be rich in compost (add compost every time you plant). Make the beds long and narrow, with small paths in between them so that you can easily plant, water, and cut the flowers. Remember to group plants with similar water needs together. Annuals are normally high water users while shrubs and perennials are medium water users. Also mulch the soil – this will reduce your watering plants costs because less water will be lost to evaporation.

What plants to choose

Easy-to-grow flowers for picking include shrubs (such as roses), perennials, and annuals. Shrubs and perennials



The 'Flower Carpet Pink' rose. (Pic. Montgomery)

are permanent plants. You can find them at nurseries or grow some from cuttings.

Annual plants grow for one season and then die, so they must be replanted every year. Some annuals only flower in summer; you can buy them in seed trays in September or sow the seeds in September (see page 28). Some annuals only flower in late winter and spring – you can buy seedlings in seed trays in May and June or sow their seeds in late March (see page 28).

Plants with showy flowers are the most important ones for your cutting garden. But, if you want to make bunches of mixed flowers to sell, you will also need some back-up plants with smaller flowers and some plants with pretty leaves.

Showy flowers

The following flowers are easy to grow as they do not require a large amount of water.

• Roses

Easy-to-grow roses for small mixed bunches are 'Baby Love', 'Duncan's Rose', 'Johannesburg Garden Club', 'My Granny', 'Playmate', 'Summersnow', 'Sunsation' roses and 'Flower Carpet' roses.



Zinnia. (Pic: Otto)



Feverfew. (Pic: Otto)

• **Perennials**

Aster - white, pink, and mauve flowers
 Carnation - pink, red, yellow and white.
 Need support to stop them flopping.
 Echinacea (cone flower) - purple or white.
 Rudbeckia - bold yellow with black centre.
 Shasta daisy - white daisies.
 Agapanthus - blue or white flowers on long stalks.
 Stalked bulbine - yellow or orange.
 Dietes - white or yellow flowers.
 Scabiosa - mauve pincushion flowers.

• **Summer annuals**

Cosmos - white, pink, orange or red.
 Dianthus - red, pink or white.
 Gaillardia - bronze shades.
 Marigold - yellow and orange flowers.
 Sunflower - dwarf types are available.
 Verbena - blue, purple, red and pink.
 Zinnia - large flowers in many colours.

• **Winter annuals**

Calendula - yellow and orange.
 Iceland poppy - long-stemmed blooms.
 Sweet pea - for short-stemmed bunches, deadhead regularly.

Backup plants

• **Shrubs**

Marguerite daisies - white, yellow and pink flowers.
 Euryops - bright yellow daisies.
 Felicia - blue daisy flowers.
 French lavender - mauve blooms.
 Grey foliage plants such as helichrysum and artemisia - dip stems into hot water after cutting to make them last.
 Yellow foliage - try *Abelia* 'Francis Mason' and variegated coprosma.

• **Perennials**

Achillea - white flowers
 Gypsophila - airy sprays of white flowers.
 Baby's breath statice - delicate sprays.
 Asparagus fern - green leaves.

• **Summer annuals**

Feverfew - pom-pom clusters of white daisy flowers.
 Nasturtium - bright yellow and orange flowers.
Salvia farinacea - blue and white spikes.
Salvia splendens - red flowers.

• **Winter annuals**

Linaria - tiny snapdragon flowers in a wide range of colours.
 Fairy primula - mauve and white delicate flowers.

Caring for cut flowers

- Always cut flowers in the cool of the early morning or evening and put them into a bucket of water straight away. Add 1 cap Jik and 2 teaspoons sugar per litre of water to make the flowers last longer in the vase.
- Cut stems at an angle to ensure that water can be taken up easily.
- Seal the ends of poppies, dahlias and other flowers that ooze milky sap by dipping the ends in boiling water, or holding them over a flame for a few seconds.
- Crush the bottom inch of thick, woody stems and branches with a hammer to encourage maximum intake of water.