



Plants for Tennessee Landscapes

Annuals and Biennials



Annuals and Biennials for Tennessee Landscapes

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Annuals are used in the landscape to provide color and seasonal interest. A true annual, in the botanical sense, completes its life cycle in one growing season. It starts from a seed, blooms, produces seed, and dies. In Tennessee, we use many plants as annuals that would actually be perennial in warmer hardiness zones. This list refers to plants that act as annuals in Tennessee climates. Annuals are popular for providing bold, colorful foliage; heavy bloom displays; and, in many cases, both. Good landscape annuals maintain their floral and foliage display throughout the season, giving them an advantage over perennials when it comes to season-long color.

Annuals can also be categorized as cool season or warm season. Cool-season annuals perform best during early spring and fall as they prefer cooler temperatures. Some even can survive freezing temperatures, but wane or die during the hotter summer months. Annuals that prefer warmer soil temperatures and perform best during the late spring and summer months are called warm season. They will not tolerate cold temperatures and will die as hard frosts arrive.

Biennial plants are less common, but some, such as foxglove and hollyhock, are beloved by gardeners. The term biennial refers to the plant's need for portions of two growing seasons to complete its life cycle. The first year is devoted to vegetative growth, which must then go through winter to experience chilling (vernalization), to initiate bloom. Then, they will bloom the following growing season. In actuality, biennials can complete the flowering cycle within a 12-month period, but two separate growing seasons are needed to complete the full life cycle. Once established and allowed to re-seed on site, they will reliably provide flowers each year.

Biennials and cool-season annuals are identified in the best sites, functions and comments column of this publication. Annuals and biennials that are most commonly grown in the home garden from seed and not generally found as transplants in the trade are addressed in a separate plant recommendation list, Seed Grown Annuals and Biennials for the Tennessee Landscape.

Reading Charts in This Publication

Knowing plant names and characteristics is important, but the crucial step in successful gardening is placing plants in appropriate sites in terms of climate, soil condition and sunlight. This publication provides guidance in those areas to assist gardeners in siting plants for optimal performance and function in the landscape. Plants are ordered alphabetically by scientific name. Common names are also included for ease of reference.

Zone: USDA hardiness zone based on the annual minimum winter temperature planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb.

Light Needs:

Sun — Site receives at least 6 hours of direct midday or afternoon sun.

Part Sun — Site receives at least 4 hours of direct sun in any site or up to 6 hours of morning sun.

Shade — Site receives less than 4 hours of direct sun, or filtered/dappled light.

Bloom or Foliage Period: General period of bloom in Tennessee and/or identifies plant specifically as one used for foliage.

Cultivars and Series: Cultivars are in single quotes, and **series** are in bold typeface. (A plant series is essentially a breeding line of plants that retain the same desirable characteristics but in different colors.)

Comments: Lists special attributes, helpful siting information, and design functions in the landscape

Scientific Name	Common Name	Size	Light Needs			Bloom or Foliage Period	Cultivars and Series	Comments
			Sun	Part Sun	Shade			
<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>	Ageratum	0.5-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue blooms Attracts pollinators Cut flower
<i>Alternanthera</i>	Joseph's Coat	0.5-2 ft	X	X	X	Foliage		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showy foliage Colors can be brighter in sun
<i>Angelonia angustifolia</i>	Angelonia	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angelface Serenita Archangel Serena 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the heat of summer blooms will slow but pick back up when temperatures cool Serena and Serenita are both seed grown; they likely will be offered in cell packs and cost less than the larger vegetatively propagated cultivars
<i>Antirrhinum majus</i>	Snapdragon	0.5-3 ft	X	X		Cool season	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Pixie' — dwarf 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not the best cool-season annual Sold in the fall and spring Poor durability in the landscape
<i>Asclepias curassavica</i>	Tropical Milkweed	2 ft	X			Summer		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attracts pollinators Host plant for monarch butterfly caterpillar
<i>Begonia Hybrids</i>	Wax Begonia	0.5-1.5 ft	X	X	X	May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Megawatt Baby Wing Big Whopper 'Gryphon' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green leaf varieties will perform better in part sun conditions Prefer moist, well-drained soil Light preference is cultivar dependent
<i>Begonia tuberosa</i>	Tuberous Begonia	1 ft			X	May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefers low humidity and dry soils Best used in containers to allow for control of soil moisture
<i>Beta vulgaris</i>	Swiss chard	1 ft	X	X		Foliage/ Cool season	'Bright Lights'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colorful stems with dark green foliage Stands out in the fall/winter landscape Edible

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<i>Brassica oleracea</i>	Ornamental Kale, Cabbage	0.5-1 ft	X	X		Foliage	<i>Kale</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Redbor' • Dinosaur • Peacock <i>Cabbage</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pigeon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cool-season annual • 'Redbor' kale is very cold hardy; others may not survive cold, wet conditions
<i>Caladium bicolor</i>	Caladium	1.5-2 ft	X	X	X	Foliage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Tie-Dyed Tree Frog' • 'Red Flash' • 'Miss Muffet' • 'Gingerland' • 'Postman Joyner' • 'White Christmas' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent plant for foliage interest with a wide selection of color combinations and patterns • Three classes include fancy leaf, strap leaf and dwarf • Traditionally a shade plant, many new cultivars are sun loving as well • Prefer high humidity and heat • Don't plant too early; soil must be warm before installation
<i>Calibrachoa</i>	Million Bells	0.5-1 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superbells • Million Bells • MiniFamous • Noa • Cabaret 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trailing, great summer bloomer • Loves heat • Best grown in containers
<i>Capsicum annuum</i>	Ornamental Pepper	0.5-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost Foliage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Black Pearl' • 'Sedona Sun' • 'Purple Flash' • 'Chilly Chili' • 'Sangria' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ornamental varieties hold their fruit in an upright, showy position • There are many more good varieties that are easily grown and add interest to summer plantings.
<i>Catharanthus roseus</i>	Vinca, Periwinkle	0.5-1 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pacifica • Valiant • MegaBloom • Titan • Halo • Trailing: 'Cora Cascade' and 'Mediterranean' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant of drought and poor soils • Loves sun and heat • Trailing forms of vinca will spread 2-3 feet and 6-8 inches tall

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<i>Celosia argentea</i> var. <i>crispata</i>	Cockscomb Celosia	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castle • Chief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often re-seeds • Blooms are large crested/rounded in form and often oddly shaped • Found in hot colors of yellow, red, orange and pink • Drought tolerant
<i>Celosia argentea</i> var. <i>plumosa</i>	Plume Celosia	0.75-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Look • Fresh Look • Kimono • First Flame • Intenz • 'Dragon's Breath' • 'Dracula' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often re-seeds • Blooms are spear shaped, found in hot colors of yellow, red, orange and pink • Drought tolerant
<i>Celosia argentea</i> var. <i>spicata</i>	Wheat Celosia	3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Asian Garden' • 'Flamingo Feather' • 'Cramer's Amazon' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-seeds profusely and can become weedy • Blooms are found in a wide range of colors from hot yellow, red, orange and pink to lighter, more subdued hues • Attracts pollinators • Used as cut flower
<i>Centaurea cineraria</i>	Dusty Miller (Biennial)	1-2 ft	X	X		Foliage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Silver Dust' • 'Cirrus' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant • Biennial grown for its silvery foliage • Performs well in summer as well as winter • Foliage used as cut flower material
<i>Cleome hassleriana</i>	Cleome or Spider Flower	3-4 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparkler • Seniorita 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniorita series is sterile; most others re-seed profusely • Drought tolerant and used as cut flower
<i>Cuphea hybrid</i>	Cuphea	1.5-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vermillionaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved by pollinators and hummingbirds • If carefully sited in West Tennessee, some may be winter hardy • Drought tolerant once established • Can be used as a cut flower

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<i>Cuphea hyssopifolia</i>	Mexican Heather	1 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FloriGlory Diana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved by pollinators and hummingbirds • Is tolerant of shady conditions • Drought tolerant once established
<i>Cuphea ignea</i>	Cigar Plant	1 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Starfire Pink' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved by pollinators and hummingbirds • Drought tolerant once established
<i>Cuphea llavea</i>	Bat face	1 ft	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved by pollinators and hummingbirds
<i>Dahlia</i> hybrid	Dahlia	1-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best grown in cooler regions of Tennessee • Watch for powdery mildew • Not tolerant of wet soils • Drought tolerant once established
<i>Dianthus barbatus interspecific</i>	Sweet William (Biennial)	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jolt • Supra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy bloom early and then sporadically throughout the summer and into fall • Attracts pollinators • Sometimes perennials in warmer regions of the state
<i>Dianthus chinensis</i>	Pinks	0.5-1 ft	X	X		May-June Sept.-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telstar • Parfait • Ideal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy bloom early and then sporadically throughout the summer and into fall • Sold mostly in the spring for the current season's bloom • Attracts pollinators.
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove (Biennial)	2-5 ft	X	X		May-June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foxy • Dalmatian • Camelot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does best in cooler regions of Tennessee, short lived • Used as cut flower
<i>Dyssodia tenuiloba aka Thymophylla tenuiloba</i>	Dahlberg Daisy/ Golden Fleece	0.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small filler plant • Tolerates drought • Great for Xeriscape • Re-seeds

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<i>Euphorbia sp.</i>	Euphorbia	1-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diamond Frost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many different species; some are perennial Drought and deer tolerant Has a milky sap that some people are irritated by similar to the poinsettia
<i>Evolvulus glomeratus</i>	Blue Daze	0.75 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Blue Daze' 'Blue My Mind' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat and sun tolerant Trailing habit Small blue flowers will close at night and on cloudy days
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Fennel	4-5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bronze fennel (foliage) 'Antares' (edible bulb) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ornamental and edible plant parts with licorice flavor Feathery foliage lends interesting texture Good heat tolerance Host plant for swallowtail caterpillars Readily self sows and can be used as cut flower
<i>Gerbera jamesonii</i>	Gerber Daisy	1-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garvinea 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefers hot days and cool nights Dislikes wet soils and may develop root rot Many color options
<i>Gomphrena globosa</i>	Globe Amaranth	0.5-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gnome Las Vegas 'Fireworks' 'Truffula Pink' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drought tolerant Attracts pollinators Some forms re-seed readily and are easily started by direct seeding. Others, like 'Truffula Pink', are only propagated vegetatively Used as cut flower
<i>Helianthus hybrid</i>	Sunflower	2-3.5 ft	X			Summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Suncredible' 'SunBelievable' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These vegetative hybrids are reblooming Well-branched bushy form Three-inch blooms; no deadheading required
<i>Hypoestes sp.</i>	Polka-Dot Plant	0.5-1 ft		X	X	Foliage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hippo Splash Confetti 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Great for container fillers as foliage plants

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<i>Impatiens hawkeri</i>	New Guinea Impatiens	1-2 ft		X	X	May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divine • Infinity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs well in part sun and full shade • Foliage can be variegated • Resistant to downy mildew
<i>Impatiens walleriana</i>	Impatiens	1-2 ft			X	May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beacon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older cultivars are susceptible to downy mildew • Recommend using resistant hybrids like the Beacon Series, Interspecific Hybrids or New Guinea Impatiens
<i>Impatiens x hybrid</i>	Impatiens	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounce • Big Bounce • SunPatiens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bounce, Big Bounce and SunPatiens series are resistant to downy mildew • Performs well in the landscape
<i>Ipomoea alba</i>	Moonvine or Moonflower	Vine	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms at night • Needs a trellis to support vine • Readily re-seeds
<i>Ipomoea batatas</i>	Sweet Potato Vine	Vine	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Power • Sweet Caroline • 'Desana' • 'Marguerite' aka 'Margarita' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown for their colorful foliage that drapes over containers and spills into landscape beds • Many improved cultivars are available that have a more compact growth habit than the originals.
<i>Ipomoea imperialis</i>	Morning Glory	Vine	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weedy and invasive • Not recommended.
<i>Lantana camara</i>	Lantana	1x1 ft-3x4 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patriot • Luscious • Lucky • Bandana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought and heat tolerant • Develops a woody stem • Is a vigorous grower; can be trailing or upright • See perennial chart for cold hardy varieties.
<i>Lobelia erinus</i>	Lobelia	0.5-0.75 ft	X	X		Cool season		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers cooler climate • Used as a filler plant • Trailing varieties are available.
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	Sweet Alyssum	0.25-0.5	X	X		April-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Snow Princess' • 'White Knight' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetative cultivars are superior to seed grown varieties • Performs throughout summer.

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<i>Melampodium divaricatum</i>	Melampodium	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-seeds vigorously • Prefers drought, heat and well-drained soil • Attracts pollinators.
<i>Nicotiana alata</i>	Flowering Tobacco	1.5-3 ft+	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domino 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blooms can be found in many colors including red, white, pink and lime green • Prefers cooler temperatures and may fade in summer months • Attractive to pollinators.
<i>Pelargonium x hortorum</i>	Geranium	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Galaxy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefers cooler, less humid climates and well-drained soil • Performs well in containers • Requires deadheading for best bloom display
<i>Petunia hybrid</i>	Petunia	0.5-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wave • Tidal Wave • Supertunia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petunias perform well across the state of Tennessee in well-drained soils • Many series and individual cultivars are available • Planting site rotations are recommended to prevent pathogen accumulation in soil • Trailing and mounding growth habits
<i>Plectranthus scutellarioides</i>	Coleus	1-3 ft	X	X	X	Foliage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ColorBlaze • Flamethrower 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grown for its wide array of colored foliage • Plants are more compact when blooms are pinched-off regularly • Newer vegetative varieties perform more colorfully in the sun.
<i>Portulaca sp.</i>	Moss Rose	0.5-0.75 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy Trails • Happy Hour • Mojave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small drought tolerant plant • Continuous bloom and trailing habit • Blooms close in the heat of day
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	Gloriosa Daisy	1-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Cherokee' • 'Goldilocks' • 'Indian Summer' • 'Prairie Sun' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant • Re-seeds easily • Great cut flower

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<i>Salvia coccinea</i>	Texas Sage	1.5-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Lady in Red' • Coral Nymph • Summer Jewel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts hummingbirds and pollinators • 'Lady in Red' is an older cultivar but is still an excellent choice
<i>Salvia farinacea</i>	Mealycup Sage	1.5-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Victoria Blue' • 'Fairy Queen' • 'Unplugged So Blue' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts hummingbirds and pollinators • Prefers well-drained soil • Powdery mildew could be an issue with overhead irrigation • Marginally hardy
<i>Salvia hybrids</i>	Salvia	2-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Big Blue' • 'Amistad' • Rockin • Skyscraper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts hummingbirds and pollinators • Has upright, 5- to 8-inch flower spikes • Great cut flower • Amistad is marginally hardy • More up and coming cultivars coming
<i>Salvia splendens</i>	Scarlet Sage	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vista 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attracts hummingbirds and pollinators • Prefers well-drained soil
<i>Scaevola aemula</i>	Scaevola	0.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Wonder • Whirlwind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blue, white or pink trailing flowers • Prefers well-drained soil • Loves heat and sun • Drought tolerant once established
<i>Tagetes patula</i>	Marigold	1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janie • Bonanza 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to grow from seed • Loves heat and sun • Drought tolerant • Large bloom cultivars are used as cut flowers
<i>Tagetes erecta</i>	African Marigold	1-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Big Duck Yellow' • Taishan • Inca 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to grow from seed • Loves heat and sun • Cut flower
<i>Thunbergia alata</i>	Blackeyed Susan Vine	Vine	X	X		May-Frost		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likes well-drained soil • Needs something to support vine

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<i>Torenia fournieri</i>	Wishbone Flower	0.75 ft		X	X	May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cloud • Kauai 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good color for a shady spot • Can re-seed
<i>Torenia hybrid</i>	Trailing Torenia	0.75-1 ft	X	X	X	May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catalina • Summer Wave • Moon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performs well in containers and in the ground • Requires even moisture in sunnier conditions • Trailing habit • Re-seeds easily
<i>Verbena x hybrid</i>	Verbena	0.5-1 ft x 1-2 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superbena • Endurascape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant, loves heat, prefers well-drained soil • Attracts pollinators
<i>Viola cornuta</i> and hybrids	Viola	0.5-0.75 ft	X	X		October-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penny • Sorbet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller than pansies and can grow in shadier conditions • Panola is a hybrid that has larger blooms.
<i>Viola x wittrockiana</i>	Pansy	0.5-0.75 ft	X	X		October-May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delta • Colossus • Majestic • Giant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many colors are available • Clear (faceless bloom) options include Crystal Bowl and Atlas Series.
<i>Zinnia angustifolia</i>	Zinnia	1 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crystal • Star 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought tolerant, mounding habit • Great in containers and landscaping edgings • Disease resistant, readily re-seeds • Attractive to pollinators
<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	Zinnia	1.5-3 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benary Giant • Zesty • State Fair • 'Zowie' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily grown from seed • Look for powdery mildew resistant cultivars • Drought tolerant once established • Readily re-seeds • Used as cut flower
<i>Zinnia hybrid</i>	Zinnia	0.5-1.5 ft	X	X		May-Frost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profusion • Zahara 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily grown from seed • Great for landscaping edging and fillers • Disease resistant, drought tolerant • Readily re-seeds • Used as cut flower



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