Flower borders add color to the landscape and provide accent features among the green tones of other plant materials. Each garden should have individuality and blend into the overall design of the property. Select the species and varieties of flowers which you like best, and blend them into a plan which will add beauty to your landscape.

The most attractive flower borders are those which are located in front of a suitable background such as a fence, shrubbery, or a building. In some cases tall flowers such as hollyhocks, golden glow, or Mexican sunflower may serve a dual purpose as flowers in the border and as background plants. Erect growing annual or perennial flowers of medium height may serve as background plants for a small border planting. If your flower border is in front of shrubs, you will need to apply extra water during periods of dry weather.

Flower borders may be of any width, depending on the space available. In a small yard the bed may be only two or three feet wide. In a spacious location the border planting may have a width of six or eight feet. If the border is quite deep, a pathway of stepping stones may be helpful as a means of working among your flowers without compacting the soil.

Tall flowers should be selected for the back part of the bed, with medium height species in the middle, and dwarf varieties along the front as edging plants. This is very easily done because the height of all varieties is stated in the seed catalog from which you make your selections. The plants along the front edge of the flower bed should be located back far enough to allow easy mowing of the lawn.

The distance between plants in a flower border depends on the form of the individual plants, and the effect which is desired in the landscape. Allow adequate space between plants. Many gardeners crowd their plants much too close together.

As a rule, the tall spired type flowers such as hollyhock, gladiolus, and rocket snapdragons which are trained to a very few stems, should be spaced about one-fourth as far apart as their mature height. Tall bushy plants may be spaced about one-half as far apart as their mature height. The rounded bushy annuals and perennials should be spaced about as far apart as their mature height. The creeping, ground cover type plants may be spaced about twice as far apart as their mature height. In all cases, if a more solid mass of plants is desired, the spacing may be reduced. If individual plants are to be more conspicuous as specimens, and be allowed to produce larger flowers, the distances should be increased.

Establish your plants in groups large enough to form masses of color or texture. As a rule, five or seven plants will create the desired effect. A large delphinium or peony will be of sufficient size to be attractive, but a random collection of individual small to medium sized plants will present a disorganized, checker board appearance. Each group of flowers should have an irregular shape. These masses of color and texture should blend into a pleasing pattern of color harmony. Dwarf flowers may be used as a continuous edging or border along the front of the bed.
Red, orange, and yellow are warm colors. Blue, green, and violet are cool colors. The use of warm colors in the flower border of a small yard will give the illusion of shallowness. Conversely, the use of cool colors gives the impression of depth. In general, the smaller the area, the fewer warm colors should be used.

Incorporate flowering curved lines in the design of your flower borders. The deeper the curve the slower the eye moves and the greater will be the enjoyment.

Spring flowering bulbs, and most perennials, have a relatively short blooming season. Start some annual flowers in flats, or in your cut flower garden, to be transplanted into your perennial border when the spring flowering season is over. This will maintain attractive color during the summer, and hide unsightly dying foliage.

Flower beds and borders are intended to provide beauty as a part of the landscape. The blooms are to be enjoyed where they are produced, and should be cut only sparingly for arrangements in the home. Flowers for this purpose should be raised in rows, as an attractive front portion of the vegetable garden.

Flower borders require continued maintenance if they are to remain attractive. Incorporate about four pounds of 5-10-5 fertilizer per 100 square feet into the soil before the plants are set in the border. Use a capful or more of starter solution around each plant when it is transplanted. This may be made from a regular starter solution fertilizer following the dilution instructions on the package, or by dissolving one-half capful of 5-10-5 fertilizer in two gallons of water. Stir thoroughly to insure as complete dissolving as possible. Drench the soil around each plant with this solution each day for about a week until the young seedlings have started to grow vigorously.

If your flower garden is located on a relatively poor soil, you may need to apply fertilizer as side dressing during the growing season. Whenever, the foliage looses its bright green color broadcast two pounds of 5-10-5 per 100 square feet around your plants and scratch into the top inch of soil. Water thoroughly to dissolve the fertilizer and move it down around the roots of your plants.

The use of a one inch organic mulch of sawdust, peat moss, lawn clippings, or shredded leaves will conserve soil moisture and help control weeds. Irrigation may be necessary during periods of drouth to maintain vigorous growth. Remove all faded flowers to encourage continuous blooming. Tall flowers may need to be staked to avoid breakage during wind or rain storms.

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