

Growing Flowers

You can grow many annual outdoor garden flowers from seed to brighten the classroom. This section provides basic cultural information and suggested varieties. As with vegetables, when choosing varieties of annual flowers for indoors, look for relatively low-growing or dwarf types.

Ageratums—Because ageratums are low-growing flowers, nearly any variety will do. The flowers are compact, dense, woolly looking, blue, pink, or white puffballs.

Alyssum—Alyssum is another low-growing border plant that comes in a variety of cool colors including purples and white. Its delicate flowers take a while to bloom, but will bloom for a long time.

Coleus—This brightly colored plant is grown mainly for its attractive, variegated leaves. Although you can easily propagate coleus from stem cuttings, it can be fun to start these plants from seed. Press the tiny seeds into place on your growing medium and mist carefully. Pinch back the main stems to encourage branching and bushy growth. If you want to maintain the vibrant leaves, pinch off the small, blue flowers as they develop.

Impatiens—Impatiens are among the most difficult of these flowers to grow from seed, although you can grow them easily from cuttings. Their seeds are extremely small, and the seedlings are often susceptible to damping off. Nonetheless, their succulent stems and colorful flowers earn them a place on this list.

Marigolds—Dwarf marigolds are a great addition to the indoor garden. Once the seeds germinate, the plants grow well and produce a profusion of blossoms ranging from almost red to pale yellow. Pinch back the main stem to encourage branching.

Morning Glories—Although these plants twine and vine so much that they cannot actually be grown for long within a light garden, the trumpet-shaped, blue flowers add a nice accent to the gardening classroom when you grow them up strings near the window.

Nasturtiums—These plants serve a double purpose in your garden, producing brightly colored orange or yellow flowers and rounded leaves, all of which are edible. The lovely flowers and peppery-flavored leaves add a nice touch to garden salads.

Petunias—Petunia seeds are very fine and difficult to work with. Scatter them on top of soil mix and mist them until they germinate. These sturdy flowers will bloom for a long time in the classroom or outside.

Snapdragons—These colorful, dragonlike flowers can add a unique touch to the classroom garden. Choose dwarf varieties if growing under lights. If your flowers are sparse, your indoor garden may be too warm for their liking.

Zinnias—Zinnias can be the bright stars of your indoor garden. A dwarf mix will yield a wide range of colors over an extensive growing season. Seeds are larger and easier to handle than those

