



Patriotic Gardens: How to Plant a Red, White and Blue Garden

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A Statewide Garden Theme

Virginia Cooperative Extension developed the **America's Anniversary Garden** in 2007 to help individuals, communities, and groups mark **America's 400th Anniversary** with a signature garden planting. The signature gardens have red, white, and blue color schemes. Although the commemoration has passed, this guide continues to be a useful guide for creating a patriotic garden. This publication is the first in a series of Virginia Cooperative Extension publications and support materials to guide gardeners - new and experienced - in developing their own patriotic gardens.

Garden Design

This publication features two designs, one for a 30-inch-wide container and one for an 8-foot-by-10-foot landscape area. Both are for full-sun locations. The selected plants - annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees - all have at least one red, white, or blue feature. If these plants are unavailable or inappropriate for your area, use substitutions from the plant charts, or suggestions from your local garden retailer or Extension agent. Always select plants that are well-adapted to conditions of individual planting sites.

The letters on the designs correspond to the codes on the suggested plants list on page 4. Use the table to identify substitute plants as needed due to availability or personal preference.

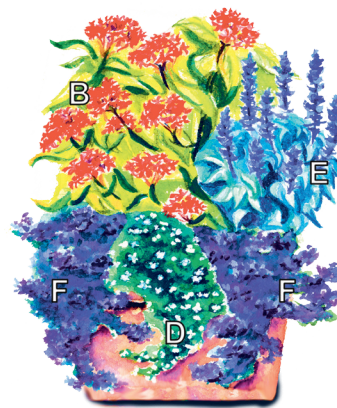


Figure 1 is the design for a 30-inch-wide container located in full sun. It is an example of a red, white, and blue combination of easy-care annuals used to create a patriotic patio garden.

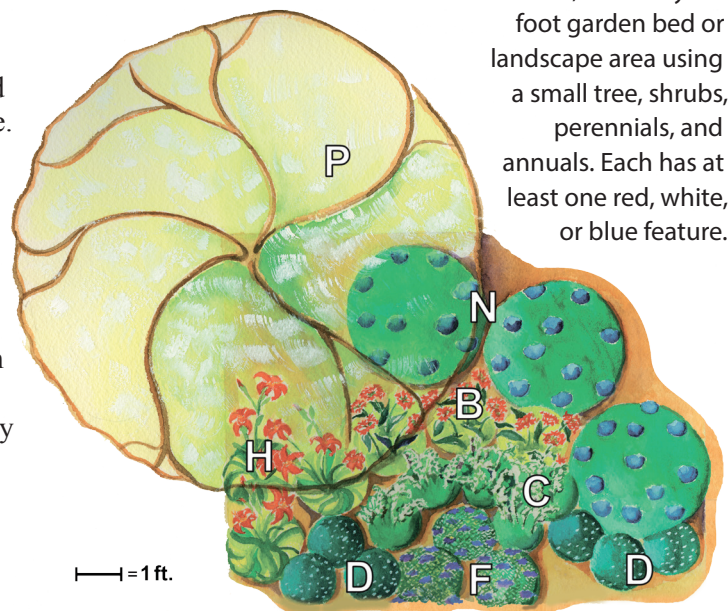


Figure 2 is patriotic garden design for a full-sun, 8-foot-by-10-foot garden bed or landscape area using a small tree, shrubs, perennials, and annuals. Each has at least one red, white, or blue feature.

Soil Preparation

Proper soil preparation is essential for the establishment and good growth of landscape plants.

Test soil drainage before planting. Dig a 12-inch test hole and fill it with water. If drainage is less than one inch per hour, relocate or raise the planting area, or install drainage to carry water away from the planting area.

Examine soil for compaction before planting. If the soil is compacted, consider replacing it with a good loam soil or incorporating several inches of an organic material, such as composted yard waste, to a depth of at least 8 to 12 inches over the entire planting area. Do not incorporate small quantities of sand; sand will increase compaction and decrease drainage.

Test the soil. Once the soil drains well and is not compacted, test the soil to determine if the pH should be adjusted or any nutrients added. To obtain a soil test kit, contact your local Virginia Cooperative Extension office. A complete list of VCE offices is available at www.ext.vt.edu/offices/.

Do not amend the soil that will be used to backfill around the root-balls of your plants. Using amended backfill soil can cause water movement problems, causing the plant roots to be too wet or too dry.

Planting Tips for Annuals and Perennials

- Annuals and perennials grow best when the planting site has been well prepared before planting. Perennials, like woody shrubs, will be in the same spot for several years so bed preparation is more important than with annuals alone. Amend the soil to correct problems with drainage and acidity or alkalinity. Incorporate several inches of compost or other organic matter to improve soil structure.
- Gradually acclimate greenhouse-grown plants by placing the pots outdoors in a spot sheltered from strong winds and direct sun. Water them as needed and increase their sun exposure daily. Protect them from frost.
- Before planting, water the plants well. To reduce plant stress, plant in the late afternoon or on a cloudy day.
- Remove a plant from its container by gently knocking on the bottom of the inverted pot. Do not pull on the stems as this may damage the plant.
- Gently pull the surface roots away from the bottom of the root-ball to reduce root circling. If a root-ball is very compacted, make a few shallow cuts through the roots on the side and bottom of the root-ball.
- Water new plants in thoroughly with a water-soluble plant food, or after applying a season long, controlled-release fertilizer.

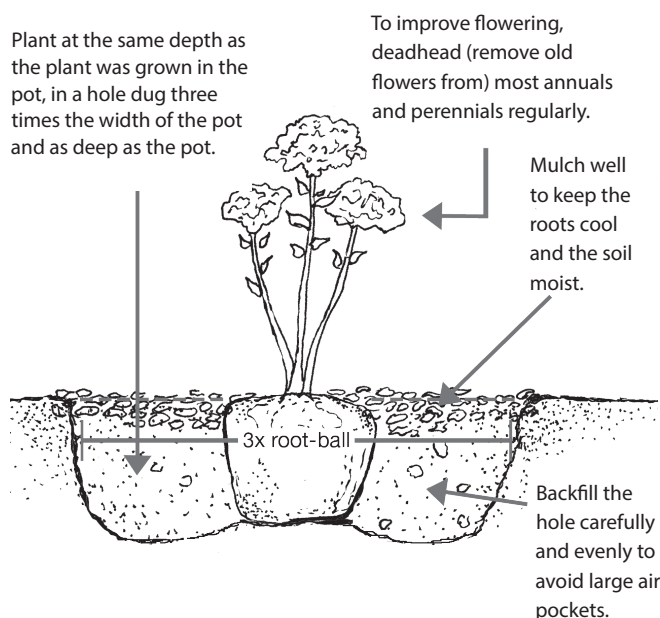


Figure 3. Annual or perennial planting guide.

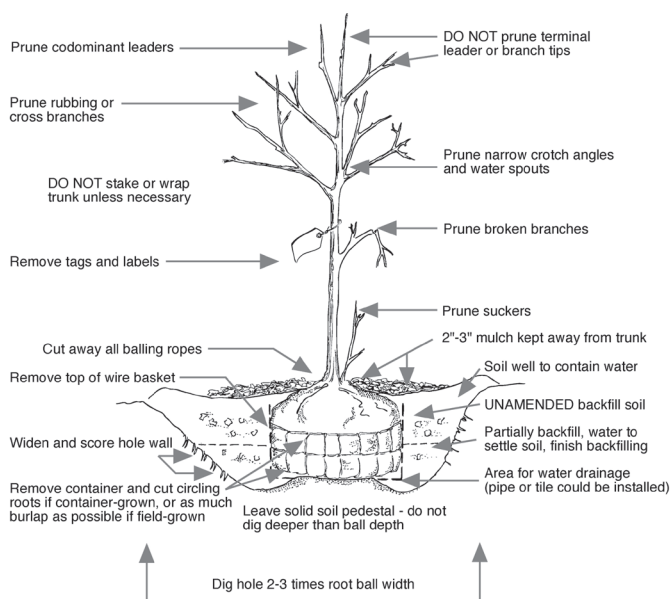


Figure 4. Tree planting guide.

Watering and Mulching

Watering is important to settle the soil at planting, encourage root growth into the landscape soil, and sustain plants once they are established.

During the growing season, plants need an average of one inch of water per week. If rainfall is limited, supplement with irrigation. Even during the winter, it may be important to water perennials, shrubs, and trees if the ground is frozen yet the temperature is warm. Use irrigation methods, such as drip irrigation and water reservoir devices, to conserve water, prevent soil erosion, and target the water application. Overwatering wastes water, may weaken roots and lead to root decay, and encourages undesirable weed growth.

Mulch benefits newly planted trees, shrubs, perennials, and annuals by conserving soil moisture, moderating soil temperature, and suppressing competing grass and weeds. Apply mulch immediately after watering newly installed plants. **Do not over mulch! Two to three inches is adequate**, less if you are using a fine material, more if it is coarse. Use either organic mulches (shredded or chunk pine bark, pine straw, shredded leaves) or inorganic mulches (shredded tires, volcanic and river rocks). To prevent insect, disease, and rodent problems if using organic mulches, and bark abrasion if using inorganic mulches, keep mulch from touching tree trunks and shrub stems. **Do not use black plastic beneath mulch around trees and shrubs** because it blocks air and water exchange.

Resources and Acknowledgments

Annuals: Culture and Maintenance, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-200, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426-200/>

Perennials: Culture, Maintenance and Propagation, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 426-203, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/426-203/>

Tree and Shrub Planting Guidelines, Virginia Cooperative Extension publication 430-295, <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/430-295/>

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Container and landscape designs and watercolors by Elizabeth Maurer.

Project supported by funding from Jamestown 2007.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; Jewel E. Hairston, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State, Petersburg.

Suggested Plant Selections for Patriotic Gardens

Code	Type	Botanical Name (suggested cultivars)	Height/ Spread	Sun/ Shade ¹	Dry/ Wet ²	Color
ANNUALS						
A	lantana	<i>Lantana</i> 'Patriot Cherry'	24" - 30"/ 30" - 42"	fs	d-m	red flowers
B	pentas	<i>Pentas lanceolata</i> 'New Look Red' 'Mars Galaxy' 'Graffiti Bright Red'	12" - 24"/ 12" - 24" 16"/16" 10"/10"	fs-ps	d-m	red flowers
C	angelonia	<i>Angelonia</i> 'Angelface White'	12" - 18"/ 12" - 14"	fs-ps	d-m	white flowers
D	bacopa	<i>Bacopa</i> 'Snowstorm'	3" - 8"/ 20" - 30"	fs-ps	d-m	white flowers
E	salvia	<i>Salvia farinacea</i> 'Victoria Blue'	18" - 20"/ 12" - 14"	fs-ps	m	blue flowers
F	verbena	<i>Verbena x hybrida</i> 'Temari Blue' 'Tukana Denim Blue,' 'Superbena Dark Blue'	12"/12" 6"/24" 8"/28"	fs-ps	m	blue flowers
PERENNIALS						
G	yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i> 'Red Velvet'	24" - 30"/ 18" - 24"	fs-ps	m-d	red flowers
H	daylily	<i>Hemerocallis</i> 'Frankly Scarlet'	24" - 30"/ 18" - 24"	fs-ps	w-d	red flowers
I	shasta daisy	<i>Leucanthemum x</i> <i>superbum</i> 'Snowcap'	10" - 14"/ 12" - 18"	fs-ps	m	white flowers
J	speedwell	<i>Veronica</i> 'Icicle' (not recommended for SE. Va.)	18" - 24"/ 18" - 24"	fs-ps	m	white flowers
K	cranesbill	<i>Geranium</i> 'Rozanne'	18" - 20"/ 18" - 24"	fs-ps	m	blue flowers
L	speedwell	<i>Veronica x</i> 'Goodness Grows'	12" - 15"/ 12" - 18"	fs-ps	m	blue flowers
SHRUBS						
M	redtwig (red osier) dogwood ³	<i>Cornus</i> spp.	4' - 8'/ 4' - 10'	fs-ps	w-d	white flowers, blue or white fruit, red stems
N	bigleaf hydrangea	<i>Hydrangea macrophylla</i> 'Summer Beauty,' 'Blue Billows,' 'Blue Wave'	3' - 6'/ 3' - 8'	ps-fs	m-w	blue flowers (in acid soil)
O	Virginia sweetspire ³	<i>Itea virginica</i> 'Henry's Garnet,' 'Little Henry'	3' - 4'/ 4' - 6'	ps-fs	w-d	white flowers, red fall leaf color
TREES						
P	fringetree ³	<i>Chionanthus virginicus</i>	12' - 20'/ 12' - 20'	fs-ps	m-w	white flowers, blue fruit on female
Q	dogwood ³	<i>Cornus florida</i>	15' - 30'/ 15' - 30'	ps-fs	m	white flowers, red fruit, red fall leaf color

¹Sun/Shade: fs=full sun, ps=part sun/part shade

²Dry/Wet: w= prefers wetter soil, m=prefers evenly moist soil, d=somewhat dry/drought tolerant

³Virginia native plant