



white hollyhocks

JOLLY ROBERTS



red pentas



'Baby Blue Eyes' (*nemophila menziesii*)

GABRIEL DE URIOSTE

the all-american garden

Showcase your patriotic spirit with a red, white, and blue flowerbed.

BY TROY W. RHONE

AS GARDENERS, one way we can show our patriotism is by planting an American garden. I have done just this at my home. My annual and perennial beds triumph fully and proudly display the wonderful colors of red, white, and blue. How the colors blend in beautifully with the American flag that adorns the front of my house. With a little planning and effort, you can achieve the same effect with the flowers of your choice.

To start, almost all plant roots need to have good drainage. If your soil has poor drainage, then be sure to amend 50 percent of your soil with a soil conditioner. You can also add in material that will aid in drainage such as a ceramic material like PermaTill®, which will help keep soil particles from sticking together and thus thwarting proper drainage.

The second key ingredient to a successful planting is soil nutrition. It is important that you give your bed both macro and micronutrients. After preparing my beds with soil conditioner and PermaTill®, I mix up my secret formula that I till into my bed. (I guess it won't be a secret anymore because I am going to share it with you!) First, I fill about half a 5-gallon bucket with soil conditioner. Next I add a cup of Flower-tone®, Start-N-Grow®, and a slow-release fertilizer. I mix this all up and then moderately spread it across the flowerbed. Finally I till or rake the secret ingredients into the bed.

Now, it's time to plant the flowers. I always plant the top of the root ball of the flower about a half an inch above the ground. This is because I want to leave room for mulch (mini-nuggets of pine bark, in my case) without covering too much of the root ball which would cause it to be

planted too deep. The mulch I use is about two inches or less in diameter, making it the perfect size, as the flowers can be damaged by something larger. Once I finish my mulching, I water with the water-soluble fertilizer Watch Us Grow®.

The third key ingredient for your flowers to thrive is ongoing fertility. If you live in an area that gets lots of rain or has a very sandy soil where you have to use irrigation often, you are going to have to feed your flowers more frequently. I use a low-potassium granular fertilizer once a month and a water-soluble fertilizer every 10 days, assuming that my flowers are getting about an inch of rain per week during the spring and summer months.

Again, I would adjust the fertility if the flowers get more or less water. During rainy times, I'll concentrate on a fast-release granular fertilizer rather than a water-soluble fertilizer applied every 10 days. Don't add more moisture to an already saturated root system. If you want to stay away from chemicals, just top dress with a soil conditioner, which is full of nutrients to feed your flowers.

If you opt to plant a traditional flowerbed, arrange the tallest plants in the back of the bed and work your way down to the shortest at the front of the bed. If you want the bed to "roll" like a flag, plant various plant groupings of differing heights along the back of the bed. I recommend that your bed be at least four to five feet deep to leave enough room for all of your plants to grow.

Whichever flowers you choose to plant in your All-American garden, one thing is certain: the results will be beautiful. 🇺🇸

RED FLOWERS:

- Tall: Crocosmia, Cardinal Flower, Knock Out Rose
- Medium: Annual Salvia, Penta
- Short: Zinnia, Petunia

WHITE FLOWERS:

- Tall: Butterfly Bush, Fairy Rose, Peony, Hollyhock
- Medium: Balloon Flower
- Short: Fan Flower, Verbena

BLUE FLOWERS:

- Tall: Salvia 'Victoria Blue,' Agapanthus 'Buddy Blue'
- Medium: Turinia, *Evolvulus pilosus* 'Blue Daze'
- Short: *Nemophila menziesii* 'Baby Blue Eyes,' Blue Star Creeper