



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Plant for Summer Now (April 12, 2025)

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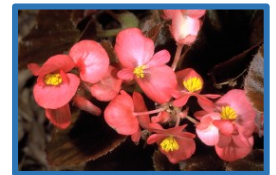
There are dozens of plants that signify summer has arrived. But early spring is the perfect time to start planting, giving their roots time to develop before the summer heat arrives.



Alyssum - Excellent for edging beds or elevated planters when a slight spillover effect is desirable. Colors are white, pink, lavender, purple, or Easter bonnet, which is a blend of all the colors. Other substitutes might be bacopa, candytuft, or lobelia; all should be planted now.

Basil - Plant a 6-pack or start from seed. At first, pinch the leaves to promote a bushier plant, and then start harvesting leaves as you need them for summer picnics and barbecues.

Begonias - We're talking about the fibrous bedding begonia plant, which is usually available in 6-packs. This little plant just keeps on giving in color. Green leaf and red flowers seem to tolerate more intense sun than white flowering ones. Also available in bronze leaf forms. All do better with a little afternoon shade. There is a tendency to overwater and waterlog these succulent plants; good water drainage is essential, or else they tend to rot. They reach a final height of 6-14 inches; I plant them about 8 inches apart and let them fill in.



Cilantro - Plant a whole seed packet, but stagger the plantings a week apart. Or plant a 6-pack a week for a month. Keep a pair of scissors outside and harvest the leaves as needed for your summer recipes.



Impatiens - This is the best flowering annual for dappled shade. Rather than just sticking these plants into compacted soil, start by preparing beds for planting by adding compost and planting mix to existing soil so that roots can develop deeply. This plant has a reputation for requiring plenty of moisture, but when root development is encouraged, it performs much better with less water. Be sure to mulch heavily to keep roots cool and discourage water evaporation.

Marigolds - These colors don't work for some yards, but they certainly shout "summer's here" in many other valley gardens.

Salvias - There are many to choose from, but it really is a matter of personal taste and garden space. Nurseries are brimming with salvias in all shades of red, purple, blue, and even pink flowers. Don't let their scraggy appearance disarm you; once planted and established, these plants will put out foliage and flowers. *Salvia officinalis* is the sage used in cooking, and even it has tricolor foliage that adds beauty to the garden. Autumn sage (*Salvia greggi*) displays flowering spires all summer. Mexican bush sage (*Salvia leucantha*) has a velvety leaf texture but requires plenty of space for its sprawling spires of bloom. Pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*) has foliage with a strong aroma of ripe pineapple and is used in cool drinks and summer fruit salads. California white sage (*S. apiana*) and sage (*S. clevelandii*), as in Cleveland National Forest in southern California, are two natives that are evergreen and a little wild, but there are some compact hybrids that have been developed for gardens.

Tomatoes - Every family should have at least one tomato plant in their backyard if they live in the San Joaquin Valley because of the freshness tomatoes bring to every meal. The tomato is easy to grow if planted now. Cage it up or just let the bush sprawl; the tomatoes can still be picked and eaten. I recommend that you buy 3 six packs of tomatoes: 2 round varieties and one cherry. Then, plant 2 of each and give the rest away to family, friends, or neighbors.

Zinnia - Most garden zinnias are strains of the *Zinnia elegans* species, an annual flowering plant native to Mexico. We appreciate zinnias for their big, brightly colored blooms. *Zinnia angustifolia* is the source of garden favorites in the "Star" series with orange, white, and yellow colors. The current rage revolves around the 'Profusion' zinnias, which are available in orange and cherry pink colors. This line is a hybrid between *Z. elegans* and *Z. angustifolia*. These newer strains have smaller flowers on a more open branching form but have fewer problems with powdery mildew, tolerate drier conditions, and still send out an abundance of blooms.



Zucchini - Plant from seed in April since you want them to be ready when your tomatoes are ready. Put a couple of seeds in each hole and pick out the weaker ones. Just a bush or two will do, and you will be kept in zucchini bread all summer.

Working in the yard is great exercise, and it's best to do it now in the milder spring weather. Then, when the heat begins, you can sit back and enjoy the blooming and eating results of your labors. Happy gardening!

Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 am

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The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions in person:

Visalia Farmer's Market, 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8 - 11 am, Tulare Co. Courthouse

Luis Nursery, 2nd Saturday, 10 am – 2 pm, 139 S. Mariposa Ave., Visalia

Hofman's Nursery, 3rd Saturday, 10 am – 1 pm, 12491 W Lacey Blvd., Hanford

Springville Farmer's Market, 3rd Saturday, 10 am-Noon, Springville