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Deadheading Brings Rewarding Results

BY JILL DEMETRE

To keep your flowers looking their best and extend their bloom, there are a few helpful hints that I would like to share with you. Not only will your flowers look better, but they will also be much healthier requiring less work from you in the long run.

Deadheading is a term that you have probably heard, or have seen in a gardening article. What this actually means, is cutting or pinching back spent blooms or stalks on your flowering plants. It is a very good practice to get into with rewarding results.

Deadheading is especially useful on annuals. Annual is a

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term for plants with an entire life span of one growing season. These plants grow from seed to bloom and then return to seed in one growing season. Their peak bloom is only six to eight weeks long, but occasionally longer.

To trick your plants into a longer bloom period you'll want to deadhead. This will mean removing the finished bloom

along with the Sepal and Receptacle (the green parts attaching the bloom to the stem). It is very

important to remove all of these parts or your efforts will be in vain. This process will signal to the plant that it is not quite time to return to seed and therefore continue to put on a beautiful display for you.

With perennials, flowers that return year after year, deadheading is a little different. Most times you'll need to cut the entire stalk back or on plants such as the campanulas, cut back to just above the next bloom on the

stalk. Many perennials, including the columbine, will reward you with a second show of blooms if you deadhead. Deadheading will also keep the more invasive plants that easily start from seed from spreading.

The last thing that is essential to a successful flower garden is watering properly. Roots need oxygen, therefore overwatering can be detrimental to your plant's health. A general rule is watering perennial beds only when the top

four inches of soil is dry. Container grown flowers appreciate a different approach. They require water when the top two to three inches of soil is dry. Weather conditions play a large role in determining a proper watering schedule.

If you follow the procedures I've given above I guarantee that you will be happy with the results.

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