

PURR-FECT PANSIES FOR WINTER COLOR

Pansy a.k.a. *Viola wittrockiana*. Pansies are a cultivated garden flower. This flower is derived from the wildflower Heartsease or Johnny Jump Up.

Fall Planting:

Pansies can be planted now in the fall. They come in a wide range of colors ranging from gold to yellow. Orange to Purple, violet to blue and a dark blue that is almost black. They are very hardy and here in Colorado can handle our cool nights and often bloom straight through into spring. Pansies are hardy to zone 4. They survive our light freezes and some snow, but if the snow sits on them for too long they would not survive. Fortunately, we usually witness that our snow melts the next day and the pansies are thankful for the much needed moisture. Pansies need to be watered deeply once a week if we do not get any snow or rain.

The pansies planted in the ground will thrive much better than Pansies planted in pots or hanging baskets. Pansies like to be planted in well drained rich soil. If you are planting in Colorado soil be sure to use some good compost. If you are planting in a pot use clean potting soil.

Pansies are technically biennials that normally have a two year life cycle, but we treat them as annuals here in Colorado.

Spring Planting:

Pansies love the cooler shadier areas of the garden and when planting them in the spring put them in an area of the garden where they would only receive morning sun. This way with proper watering and nutrition they can last longer into the spring and summer season.

Fertilizing

Pansies would do well with regular fertilizing. Choose a fertilizer that would encourage blooming. Follow manufacturer's directions.

Description:

The pansy has two top petals overlapping slightly, two side petals, beards where the three lower petals join the center of the flower, a single bottom petal with a slight indentation.

Some pansies are clear with no face and some pansies have a blotch or also known as a "face".

Name origin and Cultivation

The word Pansy comes from the French word "Pensee" which means "thought". They received this name because as the flower droops its head in the heat it looks as if the flower face is in deep thought. Pansy has often been thought of as the symbol of free thought and has been used as a symbol in literature of the American Secular Union.

Pansies were developed from the Heartsease, over a two centuries intentional cross-breeding of wild plant hybrids.

Pansies in arts and culture.

In 1926 and 1927 Georgia O'Keefe painted pansies. Her first was a simply a black pansy and then in 1927 she painted the white pansy.

DH Lawrence wrote a book of poetry entitled simply "Pansies" and William Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" uses the juice of the pansy blossom as a love potion -"before milk-white, now purple with love's wound, And maidens call it love-in idleness", " the juice of it on sleeping eyelids laid, will make or man or woman madly dote upon the next live creature that it sees" The pansies had not been developed at the time of William Shakespeare so this reference is really speaking of the wild Heartsease (Viola)

The folkloric "Language of Flowers" refers to the idea of thought again. The pansies, that's for thoughts and then from Hamlet "If a maiden found a honey flower and a pansy left for her by an admirer, it would mean "I am thinking of our forbidden love".

Pansies are one of the best plants for us in the fall and winter. Our winter would determine how long they could and would bloom, but know that fall planting will give you a jump on early spring blooms. Another garden trick is to plant your fall bulbs underneath your pansies and they will grow up in between your pansies. You may want to consider the pansy colors to match your spring blooming bulbs.