



Virginia Green Industry Council

Dry Annuals for Lasting Beauty

For Immediate Use

Contact: Virginia Green Industry Council

540-382-0943

Electronic Version:

www.viriniagreen.org

The approaching cold weather foretells the end of the gardening season and the beautiful flower gardens. Vegetables and fruit crops are easily preserved for the future by freezing and canning. But, what about your lovely garden flowers? Must their lives be limited to a few days? Not if you take a little time to preserve them. The easiest way to dry flowers is by air drying, according to Lin Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council.

The first step is to choose a place that is dry and dark with good air circulation. An attic is usually good, but a basement may be too damp. Harvest before the flowers are fully open and strip the foliage from the stems. Tie small flowers in bunches with rubber bands or string so that their flower heads do not touch. Hang the bunches upside down. Most will dry in two to three weeks.

The most popular annual for drying is probably the strawflower. They grow up to two feet tall with flowers in all shades of red, pink, yellow and gold. The showy, stiff bracts surround and conceal the tiny flowers inside.

If you like vivid purple or fuchsia-colored flowers, try globe amaranth. The ¾-inch round flower heads dry quickly and are long-lasting. Purple statice and sea lavender, which often come in bouquets from the florist, are easy to dry at home. Remove them from the bouquet when the pencil-thin spires of tiny lilac colored blossoms are fully expanded.

For warm colors—yellow, orange and red—grow calendula, marigolds, yarrow and celosia. All retain their colors when dried; however the bright, clear colors of celosia and cockscomb are unsurpassed. The flowers come in brilliant shades of yellow, orange, red and purple. Cockscomb tops resemble the combs of a rooster; other celosia are plumed or feathered.

Bells of Ireland are delicate green spikes, which enhance any arrangement. Pick off most of the leaves so the bells will be more conspicuous. Dusty miller dries to a delicate silver-white and compliments soft pink and purple flowers. For a light, airy touch, add dried grasses. Just about any ornamental grass will do, especially animated oats, quaking grass, squirrel-tail grass and rabbit-tail grass.

Air drying is quick and easy. When the flowers are dry, use them generously in flower arrangement, bud vases, door swags or wreaths. Viewing these flowers through the winter will remind you of how beautiful your garden was last summer and how wonderful it will be next spring. As you plan your flower beds, consider adding some of these flowering annuals just for drying. The following annuals can be dried by hanging upside down: baby's breath, bells of Ireland, beebalm, butterfly weed, calendula, Chinese lantern, chives, celosia, cockscomb, dusty miller, everlasting, gaillardia, globe amaranth, grasses, honesty, larkspur, lavender, lemon verbena, marigold, okra, onion, plume poppy, sage, statice, strawflowers, and yarrow.

Go to our consumer website for additional gardening information at www.VirginiaGardening.com

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

E-mail:info@viriniagreen.org

Virginia Green Industry Council
383 Coal Hollow Rd
Christiansburg, VA 24073-6721