

BUYING TRANSPLANTS

Store bought flower and vegetable plants, called transplants, are an easy way for you to have mature flowers and vegetables quickly. Here are a few tips on selecting the best transplants.

Never buy wilted plants. This usually means they've dried out. Drought stressed plants are slow to grow, flower and form fruit.

Mushy brown leaves may indicate frostbite, which will also slow growth of the plant and spotted leaves may indicate diseases. Discriminate between spots in the leaves or those on the top of the leaves. If the spots can be rubbed off, they may be water spots or from a protective spray. If the spots don't rub off, it may indicate a disease, from which the plant may or may not outgrow. At the very least, the vigor of the plant will be compromised.

Choose short, compact, bushy plants rather than tall, spindly ones. Smaller plants will suffer less from transplant shock. Yellowish or faded leaves may indicate overcrowding, lack of fertilization or past drought and in general, inferior plants.

Named varieties guarantee you are getting exactly what you want. Different varieties often have very different forms, flower colors or fruits. When selecting flowers you may wish to choose plants or trays that have a few flowers simply to ensure you are getting what you want. But pick the flowers off when planting, as the plant will establish more quickly when it is not blooming.

Finally, if you are paying for a full tray, choose one where there is a plant in every compartment, so you get what you pay for.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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