



Planting Cut Flower Perennial Plugs in Spring and Summer

Many varieties of Perennial Cut Flowers can be planted from plugs or liners in the spring and summer.

What's a *Plug*? What's a *Liner*? Both are starter plants grown in flats with multiple cells or small pots that hold the young plants. A *Plug* is grown from seed, a *Liner* is grown for a rooted cutting. Plug and Liner are often used interchangeably for both annuals and perennials. For the sake of simplicity, *Plug* will be used for this discussion. Nursery stock is always referred to as Liners.

Perennials grown from seed fall in to two categories. First Year Flowering (FYF) and regular or standard, which often don't produce a flower until the second season. Some perennial plug suppliers also offer *vernalized* perennial plugs. Vernalized means the plug was started in late summer or fall, and then given a cold period over the winter, before delivering the plug to you, the grower, in early spring. This allows the grower to plant a plug in early spring to get flowers the first year, even if a plant is not a FYF variety.

When planting Perennial plugs in the spring, it's important to know if your new perennial will bloom the year it is planted. Do some research on the crops you want to plant so you'll know if they will flower the year they are planted. Perennial plugs can also be planted in summer and early fall. These would be for flowering the following season. Planting perennials in late summer and early fall is a way to have a great harvest the following season. Phlox, Achillea, Platycodon, Sedum, and Baptisia, all work well this way.

For Spring planted perennial plugs choose varieties that are First Year Flowering. Digitalis Camelot and Dalmatian and Delphinium Guardian, Aurora, and Magic Fountain are all FYF perennials. Vernalized perennial plugs will also bloom the first year.

When planting perennial plugs in the spring, it's important to get them planted early, often a few weeks before your last spring frost. The plants need to get additional roots established before hot weather arrives if you are to get harvestable flowers the first year.

It's important to plan ahead and order plugs far in advance of when you want them delivered. Especially with vernalized plugs. They were started by the producer last summer and fall. Once they are all sold, they will be sold out until the following year. FYF perennials should be ordered far enough in advance so the plug producer has time to start the plants for your order if they don't already have them started.

Where do you find these perennial plugs? The best place to start is on a plug producer's website. They all post some sort of Availability List on their website. Some show availability for just for the next week or two, others give a forecast for the entire year. Some are a static listing that is posted once a week, some are interactive, searchable lists linked to their "live" ability and may change by the minute. Some include prices and shipping info, some don't. Unfortunately, there isn't a "standard" format for availability lists. Some will sell direct to flower farmers, most require that you order through a broker.

Remember that Culture Sheets are available for many cut flower crops with detailed growing info. Search Google for "Culture Sheet" and the name of the flower for more info.

The next page includes links to several Perennial Plug Suppliers. The lists will include perennials and annuals, cut flowers and bedding plants. Also included is a link to the Ball-ColorLink WebTrack login page. WebTrack offers the ability to search current and future availability for many of these plug producers, all from one location. They are searchable by ship week, variety, producer, type, color, and more. You must set up an account with Ball to access WebTrack.

Try to order from a location close to you to save on shipping expense. All the producers allow Customer Pickup with prior arrangements. Some of these companies do ship to Canada. Check their website for details.



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Links to Perennial Supplier Availability Lists

Kube Pak – New Jersey

<https://kubepak.com/plug-availability/>

Gro-n-Sell – Pennsylvania

<https://gronsell.com/availability-guide>

Raker- Roberta – Michigan

<http://www.raker.com/products2.aspx>

Ball Tagowa - California

<https://www.balltagawa.com/availability>

Headstart - California

http://www.headstartnursery.com/ornamental_products/availability.php

Creek Hill – Pennsylvania

<https://www.creekhilnursery.com/index.php/availability>

North Creek Nursery - Pennsylvania

<https://www.northcreeknurseries.com/Availability>

GET Group - Illinois

http://www.getgroupinc.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80&Itemid=186

Walters Gardens – Michigan

<https://www.waltersgardens.com/ordering.php?c=3>

Swift Greenhouses - Iowa

<https://www.swiftgreenhouses.com/Availability>

Aris-Greenleaf Plants - Pennsylvania

<http://www.gplants.com/availabilities>

Ball-ColorLink WebTrack – All the above companies

<https://webtrack.ballseed.com/login>