We are so fortunate to be living in North Florida where we can grow colorful annuals nearly all year long. If you have flower beds, have you noticed that you spend plenty of time during the year planning, shopping, and planting those annuals? That’s because we are changing our flowers out as our Florida weather changes.

In terms of flowers, we have three very different growing situations. In winter, there are cool days with occasional frosts or freezes at night. In the summer we have hot days and warm nights, frequent rain showers, and high humidity. During the fall and spring, the days are warm, the nights are cooler, and the average precipitation is lower. When referring to annuals, the saying ‘Right Plant, Right Place’ should also include ‘Right Time’.

The beautiful annual flowers that are the life of the landscapes and backyard gardens right now are the ‘cool’ season flowers. They have had a great growing season this year because the nights have been so cool, just the way they like it. Some of these garden jewels include the pansy, viola, sweet William, petunia, snapdragon, larkspur and sweet alyssum. Trim back the spent blooms if they have slowed down and you should get another flush of blooms before the heat finishes them.

Flowers that can stand up to the heat of our summers are called ‘warm’ season annuals. Many can tolerate dry spells and poor, sandy soil. Many will be colorful all summer if placed where they can have a little shade from the hot afternoon sun. And some just like it hot. Those that like that full strength hot sun include the marigold, zinnia, amaranthus, strawflower, melampodium and celosia. Find a full list of cool and warm season annuals for Florida at http://solutionsforyourlife.com

When your cool season plants begin to melt in the heat, replace them with the warm season plants. Give your new plants a good start. To avoid stressing the young ones, plant them in the evening or on a cloudy day. The soil should be moist but not wet. Never set out plants in dry soil because some water will move from the roots into the dry soil.

Many plants that we use as seasonal annuals are actually perennials. If a plant struggles to live year round because of our hot, wet summers or cold winters, we can still enjoy it for a season and then replace it with something else.

Even if you plant at the right time of year, pay attention to the other requirements or your plant won’t live long. Plant tags often indicate the requirements of a plant. Group plants together that like moist soil. Make a grouping of plants that don’t like fertilizer. Combine plants that have similar needs and they’ll all perform better. Take time to plan ahead for ‘Right Plant, Right Place, Right Time’.