

# Use Cool Wave pansies for lasting winter color

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This past weekend, I started planting cool-season color in my 25-gallon citrus containers.

I like underplanting in these containers for a couple of reasons. First, I can maintain a color pop through the year. And second, these annuals act as a colorful ground cover carpet that helps keep weeds at bay. I really do hate weeding, and even plants grown in containers need help with weed control.

I really like using Cool Wave pansies in these containers. Unlike the upright growth of Matrix pansies, Cool Waves have a spreading characteristic that is perfect for the ground cover effect in these big containers. They will make great spiller plants a little

later in the season.

These plants are well branched and really fill in under my citrus trees. Cool Waves are also a great choice for hanging baskets and landscape beds. Whichever way the home gardener uses these plants, Cool Waves provide great color all the way to the spring.

Cool Wave pansies are available in a variety of colors, but this year, I decided to go with Lemon Surprise and Blue Skies. I really like the combination of bright yellow and subtle blues. As always, I love the whisker lines radiating from the center that resemble the delicate strokes of an artist's brush.

Pansies are a great choice for winter color because of their tolerance of the cold.

In Mississippi, our win-

ter temperatures fluctuate between frosts and freezes followed by moderating weather. Even during the coldest periods, pansies may seem like they've frozen solid, but they thaw out and show only minimal damage to flowers that had been open. Miraculously, it seems, the plants quickly resume flowering with higher temperatures.

It is important to maintain consistent moisture for your plants, as the fall and winter months can be dry.

Keeping landscape beds and containers consistently moist is one of the best practices you can follow for helping plants tolerate cold weather. A well-watered planting soil or mix acts as a buffer to the cold. As the water cools, it releases heat that helps

keep the root system above freezing.

Many gardeners don't realize that all pansies are heavy feeders and will stop flowering when the nutrition gets too low. I always

add slow-release fertilizer for the best flowering and at planting and apply a water-soluble fertilizer every couple of weeks to maintain good plant growth. And if "Wave" in the name sounds a little familiar, Cool Wave pansies were developed by the same folks that have brought the popular Wave petunias to many of our gardens. Cool Wave trailing pansies, like their traditional upright cousins, need to be grown in the full sun -- at least six hours each day --



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The spreading characteristic of Cool Wave pansies such as these Blue Skies makes them a perfect ground cover in big containers. They spill over edges and are also a great choice for hanging baskets and landscape beds.

(Photo by MSU Extension/Gary Bachman)

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