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Perkier Pansies

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Pansies are a great winter flower. They get frozen, thaw and grow again. It takes very cold weather to kill them, once they are established. However, they can look run down and have fewer blooms. How can we perk them up?

Once flowers die, remove them. Flowers that remain can produce seed pods. To produce seed the plant uses much of it's energy--which could have been used for making more flowers. Pinch or cut off all seed pods and dead flowers once every week or two.

Winter rains leach fertilizers. Fertilize beds with liquid fertilizers every two weeks. Pull weeds that may be using fertilizer and mulch beds with pine straw.

Cloudy, wet weather can also spoil the flower show. Pansies need moisture, but too much rots their roots. Always plant pansies on raised beds. Build them up by adding soil and compost until beds are 6 to 8 inches taller than the surrounding soil. Raised beds drain better, are less waterlogged and warm more quickly in the spring. Pansies planted on raised beds are also easier to see.

Even in you did not plant like this in 1996, plan to do so in 1997. Also remember, pansies do best if planted from October 15 through November 1. They can be planted before and after this but may not do as well. If planted too early, they grow too long and are more susceptible to cold later. Late planted pansies do not get established well before cold weather and may never do well.

For more information on pansies or other garden plants call the Houston County Extension Service at 542-2020 in Warner Robins or 987-2028 in Perry.