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By real estate

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Putting in a flowerbed is a great way to add a splash of color and charm to your lawn, and turn an ordinary yard into a place to stop and smell the roses. All it takes is a little dirt work and a weekend afternoon, and you'll be ready to plant azaleas and daisies to your heart's content.

The first step is to decide the "where and how big?" question. There are a few things to keep in mind when making these choices, such as proximity to a water faucet (Or whether you need to buy a new, longer hose), what types of flowers you want to plant (Do they need full-sun or shade? Keep in mind that if your location will receive less than six-hours a day of sun, you will need to choose shade varieties of flowers, while more than six hours of sun requires sun-loving varieties), and how much time you want to commit to maintenance (Weeds love flowerbeds, too, and a smaller flowerbed means less to weed). Once you have chosen a location, you can mark the perimeter of the flowerbed using string or a hose. This provides a great visual that can easily be adjusted before you commit to digging.

After you have the flowerbed marked out exactly how you want it to be, it's time to start digging. Use a shovel or spade to cut through the sod and remove the grass and roots from the flowerbed area. Take your time--this can be backbreaking work! Make sure you put all the sod into a wheelbarrow or bucket and dispose of away from your work-zone, or your flowerbed will inevitably revert back to its origin as part of your lawn.

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Once you have the sod removed, surround the flowerbed with whatever edging you have chosen. There are lots of options, from brick, stone, and pavers, to landscaping timbers and vinyl. You will need to dig down a few inches to install your flowerbed perimeter, depending on your edging choice, in order to imbed the edging and ensure stability. If the soil is especially bad in your yard, it can be easier to build your flowerbed edging up and add garden soil, creating a raised flowerbed, than to dig the existing ground and amend the soil.

Now that the edging is installed, it's time to prepare the dirt. If your flowerbed is raised, this is just a matter of filling it in with garden soil, humus and organic compost, and mixing with either a tiller or turning it over by hand with a shovel. If you have a lower flowerbed, or if you want to use some of the native soil in your flowerbed, it's digging time again. You will need to dig down approximately eight-inches to a foot, loosening the soil and removing any rocks. Once you have dug up the entire flowerbed, add soil amendments and mix well. A consistently good amendment choice for flowerbeds is organic composts and manures, in addition to whatever amendment you may need for your soil type.

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