

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

September

Aster & Morning Glory

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Aster

A Step-by-Step Guide to Growing and Caring for Gorgeous Asters



These star-shaped flowers come in various varieties, ensuring that you can pick your variety based on the climate and general weather conditions prevailing in your area.

What are Asters?



Asters, aka Michaelmas Daisy, are star-shaped flowers native to Europe and Asia. For instance, *Aster amellus*, a species of Aster, is native to Europe. Asters, consists over 600 varieties, start blooming in the season of early fall, just when the summer bloom flowers start fading. This ensures that your garden doesn't look dry with no flowers. Asters will have your back in making your garden look as picturesque as in summer.

They are versatile in the sense that they are suitable to grow in various hard terrains like rock gardens, borders, etc. They are

considerably tall, reaching a height of 3 -4 feet or 1 meter. What is peculiar about Asters is they are marketed as seasonal; however, they are perennials, i.e., available throughout the year. On top of that, they are deer resistant and provide late-season nectar, which attracts pollinators and helps you get pure and healthy honey as well. The seed of Asters germinates faster than most plants, i.e., 8 – 10 days or, at most, about 2 weeks.

How To Grow Asters?

Before growing Asters, we first need to understand the requirement of this plant and what kind of conditions are conducive to growing Asters. Let's discuss the details:

1. When to Plant Asters



Asters plant bear flowers which can be damaged by frosting. Hence, it's recommended to plant asters after the threat of frosting has

passed. However, if you already have an Asters plant growing through the frosting, it's essential for you to take care of your Asters plant, which we will cover in the later part of this blog. Moreover, you can buy ready-made potted plants from commercial gardeners when the frost season has passed. And you can also start potting the plant indoors when winters are coming or when there is a looming threat of frosting in the air.

2. From Seeding



Ideally, you should start seeding indoors about 4 weeks before the last frost has happened in your region. You can look at previous weather records for this information. It's a beginner's task to grow Asters from seeds. However, before starting, it's essential to refrigerate the seeds for 4 to 6 weeks before sowing to simulate winter dormancy. When you are ready to plant, just sow the seeds 1 inch deep in the pot and space it adequately.

3. Using Soft Stem Cuttings



Even though the agreed-upon easiest route to grow Asters is through propagation. The method of soft stem cuttings is not that far behind and is also considered relatively easy than other methods.

To start, you just need to follow the below steps:

- Simply take the stem cuttings of another grown plant.

- Cut around 6 inches of stem from the topmost part of the stem since that part is tender and in the growing stage. You will need pruning shears to perform this task.
- Remove any leaves from the bottom part of the stem since it will be sown.
- After sowing the stem in 2-3 inches of depth in a temporary container. Water abundantly to maintain the moisture, but don't let it get soggy.
- When you see signs of growth, you can pluck the stem turned into a plant and sow it permanently.

4. Using Division



This method is also similar to propagation but still has many points of difference. For instance, in this division method, you can take the established clump of the already existing plant and divide it into 2 or more sections. These individual pieces can be planted as desired to form a plant of its own. A note to remember is that not all Aster

plants form woody clumps. So using the division method on non-woody types requires creating multiple shoots to be planted individually.

5. Spacing Requirements



Accurate spacing of the plant is essential to maintain proper airflow and optimum growth. Keeping spacing in mind beforehand will also reduce the chances of shifting the plant once it's fully grown. Since you will be already aware of the length and breadth of the fully grown plant. Moreover, in addition to getting rid of inconveniences, spacing has a major role to play in the growth of the plant. Accurate spacing will improve airflow within the plant, severely reducing the chance of pests and diseases. Also it also decreases the inherent competition between plants for resources like sunlight, air, and

space. With adequate spacing, every plant in your garden will have its own place to grow and prosper.

6. Planting in Pots



Like most plants, Asters can also be planted directly into pots which you put in your home, balcony, or patio to enhance the aesthetic of your home. But how to plant Asters? You just have to plant the seeds into the pot. The pot, even if not deep, works well. Since this plant doesn't have extensive roots, it might put pressure on the container. However, the pot should be wide enough to accommodate the growth and subsequent spreading of the plant.

Remember to plant Asters in well-draining potting soil. We will talk more about soil requirements in the later section of this blog.

How To Care For Asters?

1. Proper Sunlight For Asters Growth



Most Asters, to reach their full growth, require full sun. Sunlight helps Asters in various ways, like reducing the chances of pests and diseases. Also, your Asters might not even show any flowers if there is a lack of sunlight. Not that common, but some Asters can handle partial shade and still bloom and reach maturity. Extra sunlight also helps in evaporating the remnants of water on the flower. This helps

in reducing the chances of diseases as you must be already aware that holding moisture promotes bacterial growth.

2. Give Balanced Soil And Fertilizers



Asters are versatile, i.e., they have so many varieties you can easily choose from and grow in your garden the variety that suits your area's climate. The soil requirement also is not something extraordinary that will require additional efforts on your part. There is no reason why it should not be a part of your garden. Most Aster varieties grow well in loamy soil. However, you can also plant Asters in clay soil but make sure it has added organic content. Not only this, but Asters can also grow in alkaline, neural, as well as acidic soil with a little bit of extra care. Coming to fertilizers generally help in giving additional nutrition to the plant for added growth.

Can Asters benefit from fertilizers? Definitely yes. It has been noted that using balanced fertilizers, i.e., consisting of almost equal proportions of Nitrogen, Potassium, and Urea, is extremely beneficial for Asters. Fertilizers help in increasing fertility and have more spurt growth.

3. Water Requirement For Aster



Asters are considered to be drought resistant. Hence most varieties of Asters don't require much water. However, some situations need to be taken care of, even in the case of Asters. For instance, if the soil feels dry or you live in a very hot climate, you will probably need to water your Asters more frequently.

On the other hand, if your area receives sufficient rainfall and the weather is also not extremely hot. You might not need to water your Asters as much. Please note that several varieties of Asters show sensitivity to extra water because it leads to the accumulation of additional moisture. On the contrary, too little moisture is also detrimental to Asters. Both cases will make the Asters lose their foliage and won't let them bear flowers.

4. Temperature and Humidity



When it comes to Asters, they are pretty resilient to cold. They can withstand moderate levels of frost and also near freezing temperatures. Moreover, Aster can survive well in humidity and basically can withstand various levels of humidity.

One thing to keep in mind is some varieties of Asters start to lose flowers when exposed to hot temperatures.

5. Overwintering Asters



Asters are winter resistant, as we already talked about that. However, there are some precautions you should take when overwintering Asters. They are safe to leave in soil overwinters only if the soil is well drained and is able to maintain optimum moisture. Plants growing in the ground directly having well-drained soil can survive winters.

However, aster growing in pots should be taken care of. Their flowers need to be removed, and the plant needs to be in a container where the greenhouse gas effect prevails to give Asters a relatively warm temperature. Because the soil in pots is

different from the soil in the ground. The soil won't be as well drained in pots as compared to the ground soil. That is why putting Asters in cold containers will ensure protect your Asters plant from extremely cold temperatures.

6. Mulching your Asters



Mulching is the method of spreading organic or inorganic materials on the soil cover to protect your plants from various threats. For instance, mulching protects your plants from weeds, reduces the growth of pests and diseases, regulates temperature, helps maintain moisture, and so on.

Adding mulch to your Asters plant during chilly winters will ensure that your plant stays healthy and grows even in extreme conditions. You will be shocked to know that even groundcover

plants can act as mulch. Having adequate green cover around your Asters will help you protect your Asters the same way as typical mulching would. Moreover, enough ground cover will elevate the aesthetic of your garden while also protecting all your plants.

Different Varieties of Asters

1. Celeste



A variety that blooms early than other Asters. You can spot them through their flowers which come in dark blue cover with its centre coloured bright yellow.

2. Hazy



This variety also blooms early. The flowers of hazy Asters come in raspberry pink, with its centre being coloured yellow.

3. Puff



This type of Aster boasts of being harder than others, i.e., able to survive more in tough conditions. They come in mixed colours and, as the name suggests, look very puffed.

4. Calico



This variety of Asters is often called the 'true Asters.' It bears flowers in varying colours, from white to lavender. The centre of this flower changes colour as they age, i.e., from yellow to red.

5. Sapphire



This variety of Asters is suitable to grow in full sun. The flowers come in a muted shade ranging from blue to lavender. The peculiar thing about this type of Aster is that it's disease resistant and can tolerate various soil types.

Choose Asters For Your Next Gardening Adventure!

All in all, growing and caring for asters is an easy way to add vibrancy and colour to your living space. Asters are perennial flowers that come in a variety of shapes and sizes and are infamous for their long blooming season. Whether you are an experienced gardener or just starting out, you can plant Asters with the above-mentioned tips easily.

Asters thrive where there is plenty of sunlight and well-draining soil. You should also ensure that the location you choose has enough space for your asters to grow, as they can reach heights of up to three feet. When caring for Asters, make sure to water asters once a week, making sure to water deeply to encourage deep root growth. Fertilization should be used sparingly as it can lead to slower growth and fewer blooms.

Whether you are looking to add colour to your garden or simply enjoy the beauty of these vibrant flowers, asters are an excellent choice for any space

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I Grow Asters Indoors?

Even though Asters require sunlight, they can be planted indoors. You just need to provide them with a minimum of 6 hours of sunlight and use fertilizers once a month to keep the plant healthy. The soil should not be normal ground soil; rather, it should be mixed with peat for optimum growth of the plant.

What Plants Are Similar To Asters?

Asters come from a family of beautiful siblings. For instance, daisies, sunflowers, chrysanthemums, and echinacea all belong to the same family as Asters. And they all have aesthetic and eye-catching blooms to enchant your heart and surrounding.

Are Asters The Copy Of Daisies?

This confusion is existing since forever. It's a very common mistake to make since both plant species look very similar to each other. Moreover, they also belong to the same family. However, Asters are different from Daisies. The main point of difference is the central disk of the flower. It's much larger in Daisies as compared to Asters.

Morning Glory

14 Essential Tips for Growing Morning Glory That Blooms Like Crazy



Morning Glories are one of those plants that can quickly steal the show in any garden. With their vibrant colors and fast-growing vines, they can cover fences, trellises, and even spill over the edges of containers. If you're hoping for a bloom-filled display, there are a few tips and tricks that can help ensure your Morning Glory thrives and flourishes like crazy.

To make the most of this beautiful vine, it's important to pay attention to its needs from planting to blooming. Simple things like choosing the right spot, providing adequate water, and giving the plant room to grow can make all the difference. In this guide, we've put together some essential tips to help you

achieve a stunning Morning Glory display that'll be the envy of your garden.

Choose the Right Location



Morning glories thrive in sunny locations. Aim for a spot where they can bask in at least six hours of sunlight daily. This sunlight is crucial for flower production. If possible, opt for an east-facing wall or trellis where they catch the first rays of the morning sun.

Planting in the right location ensures your morning glories receive adequate light, which encourages abundant blooming. Avoid overly shaded areas as they may lead to reduced flower production.

Remember, more sunlight means more flowers, so choose your location wisely to enjoy a vibrant display.

Prepare the Soil



Morning glories flourish in well-draining soil. Before planting, enrich the soil with organic matter like compost. This not only enhances drainage but also provides essential nutrients. Ensure the soil is loose to allow roots to establish easily.

Avoid waterlogged areas, as poor drainage can lead to root rot and inhibit growth. A well-prepared soil offers the perfect foundation for a thriving plant.

With healthy roots and nutrient-rich soil, your morning glories will have every opportunity to bloom vigorously throughout the growing season.

Water Consistently



Consistent watering is key to growing healthy morning glories. These plants prefer a moderate amount of water, so aim for soil that's moist but not soggy. During dry spells, ensure you water them regularly.

Over-watering can be detrimental, leading to root problems, while under-watering might stress the plant. It's about finding the right balance.

Incorporate mulching to help retain moisture, especially during hot days. By maintaining consistent moisture levels, you support robust growth and encourage abundant flowering.

Use Support Structures



Morning glories are natural climbers. Providing them with support structures like trellises or fences encourages upward growth and prevents sprawling. Choose decorative structures to add aesthetic appeal to your garden.

Securely tie the vines as they grow, guiding them to cover the desired area. This not only tidies up your garden space but also promotes more blooms, as the vines receive better sunlight exposure.

With the right support, your morning glories will create a stunning vertical display, turning your garden into a vibrant tapestry.

Fertilize Wisely



Using the right fertilizer helps morning glories thrive. Opt for a balanced, slow-release fertilizer to promote healthy growth. Apply it sparingly; too much can encourage leafy growth over flowers.

Fertilizing during the early growth stages ensures the plant builds strong stems and leaves. As blooming begins, reduce feeding to prevent overgrowth.

Proper fertilization supports vibrant blooms without overwhelming foliage, striking the perfect balance for a

flourishing plant. With wise fertilization, your morning glories will be the envy of the neighborhood.

Prune Regularly



Pruning is essential to maintain healthy morning glories. Trim back excess growth to promote airflow and light penetration, which leads to more blooms. Focus on removing dead or tangled vines regularly.

Regular pruning prevents the plant from becoming unruly and encourages robust flowering. Use sharp scissors to make clean cuts, avoiding damage to healthy vines.

By maintaining a tidy plant, you improve its overall health and enhance its visual appeal. Pruning not only controls growth but also boosts flower production, ensuring a spectacular display.

Monitor for Pests



Be vigilant about pests that can affect morning glories. Common problems include aphids and spider mites. Regularly inspect leaves and stems for signs of infestation or damage.

Introduce natural predators like ladybugs or use organic insecticides to manage pests. Early detection and control are crucial to prevent widespread damage.

By keeping pests in check, you ensure your morning glories remain healthy and continue to produce vibrant blooms. With a watchful eye, your garden will flourish without the hindrance of unwanted visitors.

Control Weeds



Weeds compete with morning glories for nutrients and space. Regularly remove weeds from around your plants to ensure they have ample room to grow and access to essential resources.

Use mulch as a barrier to prevent weed growth, which also helps retain soil moisture. Consistent weeding keeps your garden neat and reduces competition for sunlight and nutrients.

By controlling weeds, you allow your morning glories to thrive without hindrance, resulting in a healthier, more vibrant display. Your efforts will be rewarded with a garden that blooms beautifully.

Provide Adequate Space



Morning glories need space to spread their vines and receive adequate air circulation. When planting, ensure sufficient spacing between plants to avoid overcrowding.

This spacing allows for healthier growth and prevents diseases that thrive in tightly packed conditions. Plan your garden layout to accommodate their sprawling nature.

With ample space, your morning glories can grow unimpeded, resulting in more vigorous and plentiful blooms. A well-planned

space supports a flourishing garden, showcasing the beauty of these charming climbers.

Rotate Planting Locations



Rotating planting locations each season prevents soil depletion and reduces pest build-up. By changing spots, you provide fresh soil conditions, promoting healthier growth.

This practice also helps disrupt pest life cycles, minimizing infestations. Consider rotating with other plants that complement morning glories in terms of sunlight and water needs.

Through rotation, you maintain soil vitality and enhance plant health, ensuring your morning glories continue to bloom beautifully year after year. A strategic planting plan makes all the difference.

Mulch for Moisture Retention



Mulching around morning glories helps retain soil moisture and suppress weed growth. Use organic mulch like straw or shredded bark, applying it around the base of your plants.

This layer keeps roots cool and conserves water, reducing the need for frequent watering. It also adds nutrients as it breaks down, enriching the soil.

By mulching, you create an ideal environment for your morning glories to thrive, ensuring they remain healthy and well-hydrated throughout the growing season.

Ensure Proper Drainage



Proper drainage is crucial for healthy morning glory growth. Ensure your garden beds or pots have adequate drainage holes. Avoid areas prone to waterlogging.

Consider using raised beds or adding gravel to improve drainage in your garden. This prevents root rot and helps maintain a healthy plant environment.

With proper drainage, your morning glories can absorb nutrients effectively, leading to vigorous growth and blooming. A well-drained garden is key to a successful and vibrant floral display.

Use Companion Planting



Companion planting with morning glories can enhance growth and deter pests. Pair them with plants like marigolds or nasturtiums, which attract beneficial insects.

These companions can also enhance the soil, providing a balanced environment. Their natural properties help keep pest populations in check, benefiting your garden.

By choosing the right companions, you create a symbiotic relationship that boosts your morning glories' health and flowering potential. It's a natural way to cultivate a thriving and harmonious garden space.

Deadhead Spent Blooms



Deadheading, or removing spent blooms, encourages more flowers to grow. As blooms fade, use scissors to cleanly snip them off.

This prevents the plant from using energy to produce seeds and instead redirects it towards new flower growth. Deadheading maintains a neat appearance and boosts flower production.

Regularly check and remove any faded blooms to keep your morning glories looking fresh and vibrant. With this simple practice, your garden will be filled with continuous waves of colorful blossoms.