

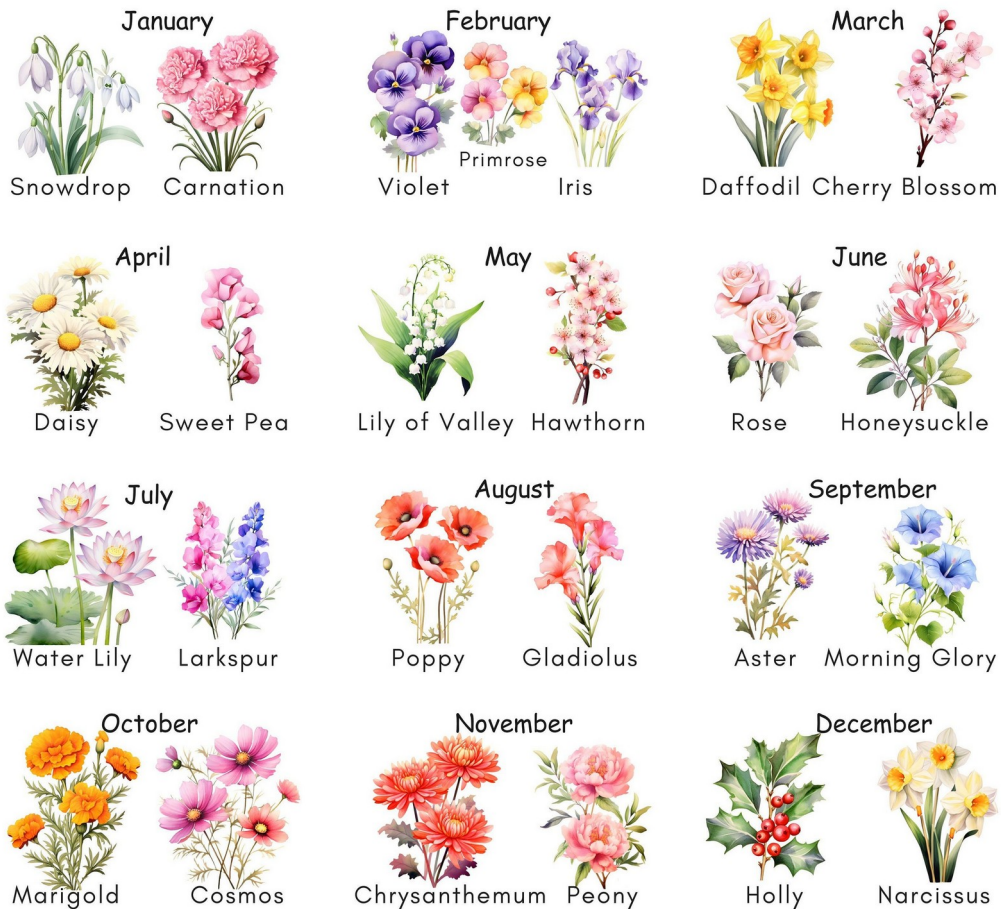
Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for January – December

Composited by Gareth Richards

June 2026

Birth month Flowers



Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

January

Carnation & Snowdrop

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Carnation

HOW TO GROW AND CARE FOR CARNATIONS

Dianthus caryophyllus

Fragrant, frilly, and long-lasting, carnations are easily grown in the garden and among the most popular of cut flowers.

Hardy ornamentals, they make a colorful addition to beds, borders, and containers as well as cottage and rock gardens – and they're an absolute must-have for cutting gardens.

Blooming profusely from late spring into midsummer, the flowering season is easily extended with regular deadheading.

Many varieties, but not all, feature a delightful, spicy-sweet fragrance from blooms of peach, pink, salmon, scarlet, red, white, yellow, and more recently, purple.

They form attractive, spreading clumps and the narrow, glaucous or blue-green foliage adds beautiful cool tones that remain evergreen or semi-evergreen in mild winter climates.

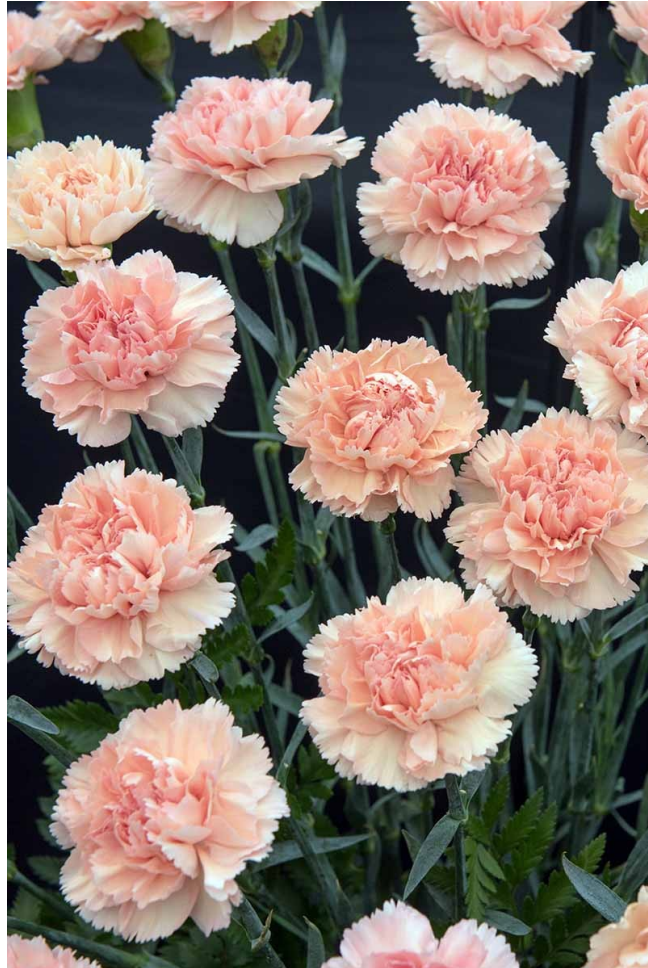
The flowers are attractive to bees, butterflies, and other pollinators but rabbits, squirrels, and deer leave them alone.

And along with being fabulous cut flowers, they also dry well for inclusion in potpourri mixes or they can be pressed for cardmaking and other artworks.

Are you looking for boldly colorful, fragrant, and easily cultivated perennials? Then join us now for a read on how to grow and care for carnations!

What Are Carnations?

Carnations, *Dianthus caryophyllus*, are a species of herbaceous perennials sometimes grown as annuals that grow up to 30 inches tall and form attractive, spreading clumps or mats.



The fringed flowers of carnations and their hybrids have a radial symmetry with a sweetly spicy fragrance of cloves.

The scent is lighter than other *Dianthus* species such as Cheddar pinks (*D. gratianopolitanus*), and many cultivars are entirely fragrance-free.

The opposing, narrow leaves are a pretty gray-green or blue-green and make a handsome contrasting anchor for the color-saturated flowers floating above.

These **edible flowers** measure one to two inches across and have a mildly sweet and peppery flavor. Forming on wiry stems, they develop singly or in groups of up to five, with single or double petals.



Cultivar colors include vibrant shades of green, peach, pink, salmon, scarlet, purple, red, white, and yellow, with some having striped variations or picotee edging.

Most are hardy in USDA Zones 5 to 9 and flower from mid- to late spring into midsummer.

However, several cultivars give a steady, but lighter, rebloom through late summer when spent flowers are deadheaded.

Cultivation and History

Thought to be natives of the Mediterranean region of southern Europe, cultivation dates back to at least ancient Greek and Roman times.



The genus name, *Dianthus*, is from the Greek words for divine (*dios*) and flower (*anthos*), meaning flower of the gods – clearly, they thought they were heaven-scent(ed)!

The species epithet, *caryophyllus*, refers to the clove scent. In antiquity, carnations were used in ceremonial crowns, and in some cultures they're symbolically used to express love and affection, but with variations depending on the flower color.

The three most popular types of carnations are the tall, large-flowered cultivars most often used by florists, and spray or dwarf varieties that are typically grown in the home garden.

Florists' carnations usually have one to three flowers per stem and typically grow 18 to 30 inches tall. Spray and dwarf varieties have multiple blooms per stem and grow between nine and 24 inches tall.

The *Dianthus* genus also includes several other popular garden species, such as **alpine pinks** (*D. alpinus*), **Cheddar pinks** (*D. gratianopolitanus*), **China pinks** (*D. chinensis*), **garden pinks** (*D. plumarius*), and **large pinks** (*D. superbus*).

Propagation

Carnations are propagated by root division, seed, or stem cuttings.

Root Division

Root division is a good way to rejuvenate old plants that are overcrowded or suffering from dieback.

To divide plants, in early autumn dig up the entire clump, inserting your spade a few inches away from the plant's perimeter to ensure roots aren't damaged.

Using your fingers or clean, sterile garden shears, pull or cut plants into smaller sections, carefully teasing the roots apart.

Discard the middle or older sections if they're tired or spent, as well as any pieces with rotting or soft roots. Each section should have several healthy shoots and roots attached.

Plant divisions into prepared locations, ensuring the roots are just below the surface, but keeping the crown and stems above the soil line – avoid burying the crown as this may lead to problems such as crown and root rot.

Stem Cuttings

Professional growers propagate carnations by rooting terminal flower stem cuttings. Terminal flowers are the ones that form at the end of a stem, not where the stem and branch meet.



Take four- to six-inch cuttings in summer, preferably in the cool of morning, from non-flowering stems.

Use a clean, sharp knife or scissors to cut just below a set of leaf nodes. Pinch off the bottom set of leaves and dip the cut end into a rooting hormone if desired.

Fill four- to six-inch pots or a seed tray with a fine-textured potting mix and push stems into the soil up to the first set of leaves, spacing evenly so the leaves of different cuttings aren't touching.

Gently firm the soil around them for stability.

Water gently but thoroughly to saturate the soil then cover with a cloche, dome, or plastic bag.

Place in a bright, sunny windowsill and keep the soil slightly moist until cuttings have rooted, which should happen in about three to four weeks.

Every few days, uncover the cuttings for a couple of hours to allow fresh air circulation, which helps to prevent fungal infections. Once new leaves emerge, take the covers off for good.

When the cuttings are rooted and producing new growth, repot each stem individually and place in a warm, protected site in the garden that's sheltered from the hot afternoon sun.

As the temperatures drop, you can move them **to a cold frame** or into a location that's protected from frost.

Plant out into the garden the following spring.

From Seed

To propagate carnations from seed, they can be started early indoors or sown directly in the ground in April or May – but note that direct-sown seeds are unlikely to flower until their second year.



For first-year flowers, start indoors 12 to 14 weeks prior to your last frost date in spring.

Fill seed trays or small containers with fine-textured and well-draining potting mix.

Sprinkle the seeds evenly across the soil, then cover them lightly. Water gently until the soil is moist then cover with a cloche, dome, or plastic bag to create a greenhouse effect.

Germination should take place in a few days. After seeds sprout, remove the covers for a couple of hours every few days to allow for air circulation.

Keep the potting medium evenly moist.

Once seedlings have two or three sets of leaves, after all danger of frost has passed, transplant into the garden or into larger containers.

To direct sow outdoors, wait until after all threat of frost has passed. Prepare beds with fertile, well-draining soil and sow seeds one-eighth of an inch deep.

In the absence of rain, keep them lightly moist but not waterlogged. Once plants are four to six inches tall, thin to 10 inches apart.

How to Grow

Carnations flower best in fertile, humus-rich soil with a pH of 6.7 to 7.0 in a full sun location – but they do appreciate some **shade in areas with very hot afternoon sun**.



Prepare and enrich the planting site by amending the soil with compost.

To improve drainage, add granite chips, landscape sand, or pea gravel – *Dianthus* must have well-draining soil to avoid problems like crown and root rot.

Mix in some bone meal to create strong, healthy roots, using one to two tablespoons per gallon of soil.

Place plants so the crown is just above the soil and then backfill, firming the soil lightly around the roots.

Water gently and thoroughly, and maintain even moisture until established. Once plants are growing well, water them deeply once a week, waiting until the top inch of soil is dry between applications. Apply mulches carefully and keep moisture-retentive materials away from the crown.



Crowding carnations with thick mulches that hold water can trap too much moisture around the crown and also inhibit air circulation, which can lead to issues like crown rot and fungal infections.

For taller varieties that grow up to 30 inches, a mesh grid netting can be beneficial to protect the wiry stems from wind damage or flopping.

For container growth, *Dianthus* must have well-draining, humus-rich soil.

Choose planters with drainage holes. I like to add a two-inch layer of drainage material such as broken pottery or pebbles to the pot before filling it with soil – this helps to prevent soggy roots and associated problems.

Enrich the container soil with compost or well-rotted manure and amend with drainage materials like coarse landscape sand or granite chips if needed.

Avoid overcrowding container plants to ensure adequate air circulation and trim the outside stems as needed to prevent overlapping leaves and stems.

Growing Tips

Easy to care for, the following tips will help you to keep your carnations healthy and vibrant:

- Plant in a full sun location and provide afternoon shade in hot regions.
- Ensure proper spacing and water in the morning to prevent fungal infections.
- Tall varieties may need a support to hold stems upright as they grow.
- Divide clumps every three to five years to rejuvenate and revive plants.



Pruning and Maintenance

During the growing season, water plants weekly, giving them a good soak and then allowing the top inch of soil to dry out between applications.

Containers may need to be watered more frequently.

For a long flowering season, cut stems regularly and **deadhead by trimming away spent flowers** to encourage reblooming.

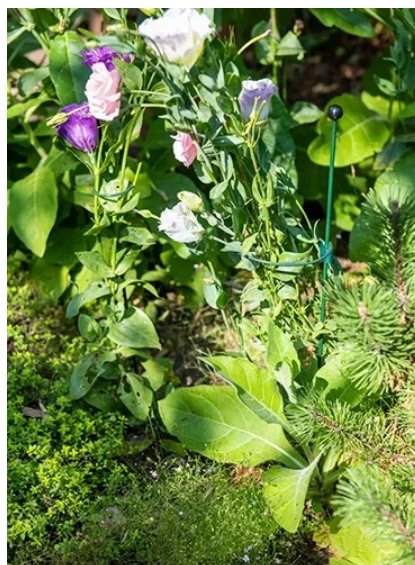
In early spring, feed bedding plants and containers with a slow-release granular fertilizer or feed with a water-soluble application monthly from early spring to mid-August.

Use an all-purpose formula such as 20-10-20 NPK.

An alternative is to apply a two-inch layer of compost in early spring, raking it gently into the soil around the root zone. Take care to keep compost away from the crown to avoid impeding air circulation.



Taller species can benefit from staking should they become top-heavy with flowers. Use any type of stakes such as bamboo, or ones with an adjustable hoop to easily control flopping flowers.



Another option for staking tall cultivars is to run a 12-inch section of netting between a few anchoring stakes, weaving the net between plants for support.

Place the netting so the top edge is a few inches below the flower buds.



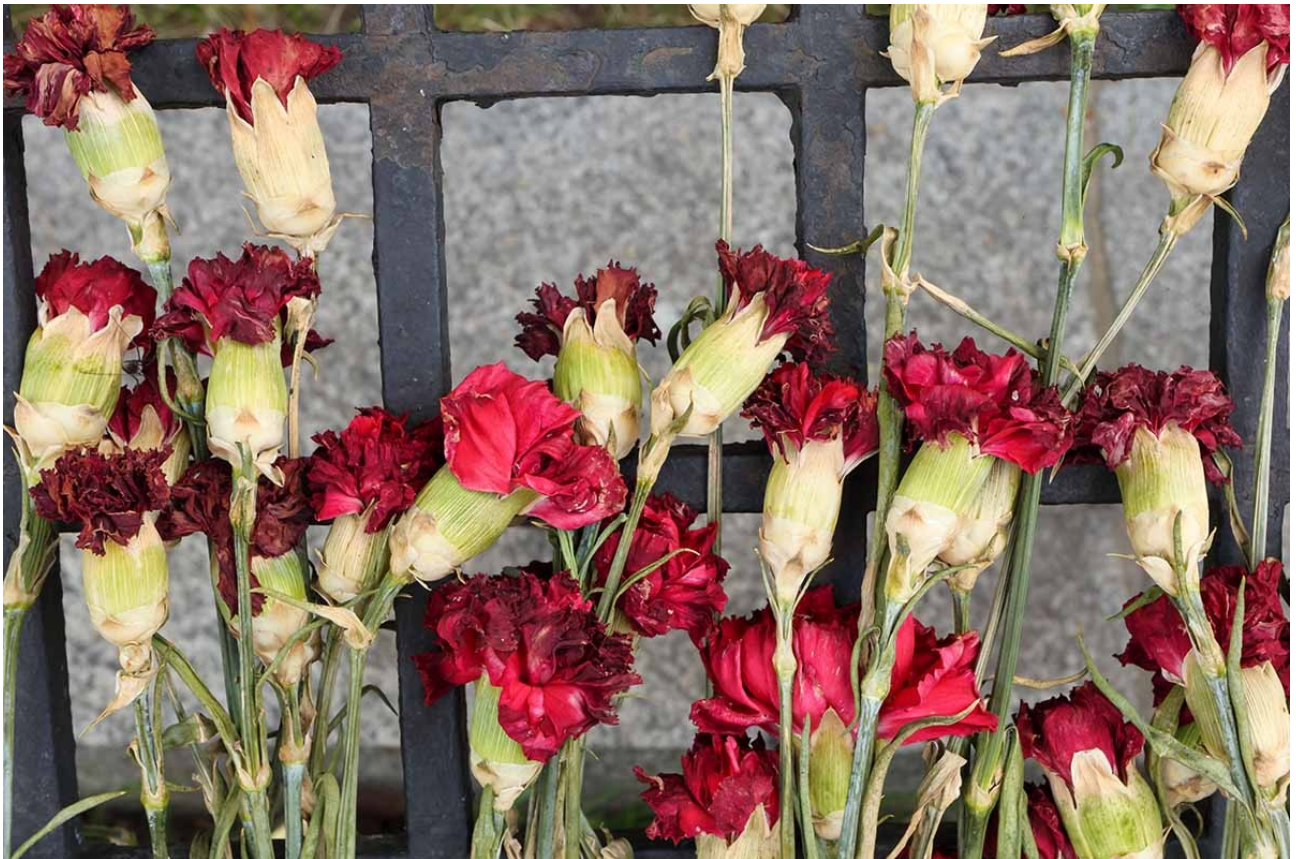
Nylon Trellis Netting

Nylon trellis netting that's easily cut to size is also **available at Gardener's Supply**.

Dianthus species are fairly short-lived and benefit from division every three to five years to rejuvenate plants.

To divide plants, use the same steps that are outlined in the Root Division section above.

To collect seeds, don't deadhead the last round of flowers and allow the spent flowers to form seed heads.



To avoid losing the small seeds, cut the stems before the pods dry out entirely, then finish drying indoors in a warm, dry environment.

You can also invert a small paper bag over the seed heads and secure it in place with twine or an elastic band.

Once the pods are dry, cut the stems and turn bags right side up. Give them a good shake to collect the seeds in the bottom of the bag.

A kitchen sieve is a useful aid for separating seeds from the petal and pod chaff – keep it in your **garden tote** for small-seeded plants like **basil**, carnations, and **snapdragons**.

For full, vibrant clumps with new volunteers each spring, use some of the last round of flowers for self-seeding.

In fall when the seed heads are dry but not fully open, leave them to spread on their own or crush the pods and sprinkle the seeds generously where they grow.

Not all carnation cultivars are self-seeding, but many are. To restrict volunteers, if you'd prefer, be sure to diligently deadhead after flowering.

Remove dead or spent materials and trim plants by up to one-third by mid-autumn. Clean beds of dead or decaying material before winter to deter overwintering of unfriendly pathogens.

To protect plants from winter cold, use only free-draining mulches like pea gravel – heavy, water-retentive materials can lead to issues like crown and root rot. Cover the root zone with two to four inches of gravel but leave the crown clear.

Cultivars to Select

With hundreds of cultivars, the range of carnation choices is extensive. Here are a few popular options to get you started:

CanCan Scarlet

An All-America Selections (AAS) winner for its spicy fragrance, heat tolerance, and long flowering season, the vividly colored 'CanCan Scarlet' produces bright red clouds of two-inch, fully double, and highly fragrant blooms.

A vigorous grower with deep, even coloring, the well-branched plants grow 12 to 15 inches on strong, wind-tolerant stems and flower from late spring into fall with regular deadheading.



'CanCan Scarlet'

Hardy in Zones 5 to 10, start seeds indoors 12 to 14 weeks prior to your final frost date for first-year flowers.
Seeds are **available at True Leaf Market.**

Chabaud Blend

Old-fashioned charmers that are a must for the cutting garden, this Chabaud blend features fragrant flowers in a rainbow mix of colors including pink, purple, scarlet, white, and yellow.

The Chabaud series was developed in France in 1870 and remains among the most popular for the home garden, treasured for their abundant sprays of fringed and ruffled flowers, deep fragrance, and long flowering season.

The edible, spicy-scented blooms flower from late spring into fall with regular deadheading and make excellent cut flowers or a colorful garnish for plates and cold drinks.



Chabaud Blend

Plants grow up to 24 inches tall and are hardy in Zones 6 to 9.
Seed packets are [available at Botanical Interests](#).

La France

A highly perfumed heirloom cultivar with delicately fringed, blush pink flowers, 'La France' also has a sweetly spicy scent.

The vigorous plants grow 24 to 30 inches tall and are well-branched, producing a profusion of flowers from late spring into fall if spent blooms are deadheaded.



'La France'

Hardy in Zones 7 to 9, 'La France' is often started indoors early and grown as an annual in other Zones.

Magenta

A beautiful spray carnation with dense branching and strong stems, 'Magenta' is a brilliant shade of raspberry red with a strong, spicy-sweet fragrance.

The dazzling, fully double flowers are ideal for beds, borders, containers, and cutting gardens, and bloom from early summer until frost with regular deadheading.



'Magenta'

Plants grow up to 24 inches and are hardy in Zones 6 to 10.

Marie Chabaud

A vintage classic with sweetly fragrant, frilly double blooms of pale lemon yellow, 'Marie Chabaud' flowers profusely from late spring until late September, an excellent choice for beds, borders, and cut flowers.

Flowers are displayed on sturdy stems in plentiful sprays and grow up to 24 inches.



'Marie Chabaud'

Plants are hardy in Zones 6 to 8 and can be grown as an annual in colder regions. Regular deadheading prolongs flowering.

Memories

A plant to remember, 'Memories' is a highly scented dwarf variety loaded with fully double, pure white blooms that flower from late spring and into fall with regular deadheading.



‘Memories’

A beautiful choice for border fronts, containers, edging, and rockeries, the well-branched, petite plants form neat, tidy mounds that grow 10 to 12 inches tall. Hardy in Zones 5 to 9.

Orange Sherbet

Sweetly satisfying in shades of coral and salmon, ‘Orange Sherbet’ flowers are double petaled and among the most fragrant of spray carnations.

Flowering from early summer through to September with regular deadheading, the densely branched plants grow up to 24 inches tall and are hardy in Zones 6 to 8.



'Orange Sherbet'

Start seeds indoors and grow 'Orange Sherbet' as an annual in colder climates.

Managing Pests and Disease

Carnations are increasingly bred for improved disease resistance, but there are still a few issues to watch for.

Aphids, mites, and **thrips** are common sapsucking pests that can cause streaking, spotting, and yellowing on leaves, petals, and stems.

Often a strong jet of water from the **garden hose** is enough to take care of these insects, but dense infestations can require the use of a pesticide such as neem oil.

Problems such as bacterial wilt (*Burkholderia caryophylli*) and fusarium wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum*) cause problems like drying, stem cracking, yellowing, and wilting, and are fatal to plants.

Remove and destroy infected plants as soon as possible and grow new plants in beds of fresh, pasteurized soil. Also, avoid overhead watering, which spreads bacterial growth through splashing.

Fungal problems such as botrytis blight (*Botrytis cinerea*) and rust (*Uromyces dianthi*) can be avoided by ensuring good air circulation, and avoiding overhead watering or watering late in the day.

Remove and destroy infected materials, ensure your tools are sterile when cutting flowers, and spray symptomatic plants with a natural fungicide like neem oil.

Best Uses

With their bewitching fragrance, bright colors, and long flowering season, carnations add vivid charm to a number of settings.



For long-lasting, juicy pops of color, add them to beds, borders, islands, rockeries, and containers.

To enjoy their fragrance, they're a natural for edging paths and patios, planters around seating areas, and window boxes as well. They're a mainstay in butterfly and **cottage gardens** as well as wildflower meadow blends.

And **don't forget the cutting garden**... you'll want to plant plenty to bring these long-lasting and fragrant (or not if you prefer!) beauties indoors for floral arrangements.

They're also a sensation when dried and added to potpourri blends or pressed for cards, papermaking, posters, and more.

Quick Reference Growing Guide

Plant Type:	Perennial flower	Flower / Foliage Color:	Glaucous, blue-green/pink, peach, salmon, scarlet, purple, red, white, yellow
Native to:	Mediterranean region	Tolerance:	Deer, rabbits, rodents
Hardiness (USDA Zone):	5-10, depending on cultivar	Maintenance:	Low
Season:	Late spring-summer	Soil Type:	Organically rich, fertile
Exposure:	Full sun	Soil pH:	6.7-7.0
Spacing:	6-12 inches	Soil	Well-draining

Drainage:			
Planting Depth:	1/8-inch (seeds), depth of container (transplants)	Attracts:	Bees, butterflies, other pollinators
Height:	9-30 inches	Uses:	Beds, borders, containers, edging; butterfly, cottage, cutting, and rock gardens
Spread:	8-14 inches	Family:	Caryophyllaceae
Water Needs:	Moderate	Genus:	<i>Dianthus</i>
Common Pests and Diseases:	Aphids, mites, thrips; bacterial wilt, fusarium wilt, botrytis blight, rust	Species:	<i>Caryophyllus</i>

Showy and Perfumed

With their vivid, highly saturated colors and sweet fragrance, carnations are a welcome addition throughout the garden.



Their easy care and long flowering time is ideal for plantings where their perfume can be enjoyed, like edging beds and pathways or in containers, patio planters, and window boxes.

Plus, they're an excellent, pollinator-attracting addition to butterfly, cottage, and rock gardens.

However you use them, be sure to plant plenty for cutting so you can bring their showy, perfumed beauty indoors as well!

How to Plant and Grow Snowdrops



Key Points:

1. Height: varies from 8-10 cm (G. 'Tiny Tim') to giant snowdrops 30cm (G.elwesii)
2. Light: As a woodland plant, best in partial/dappled shade
3. Soil: Moist, well-drained, preferably with added leaf mould and not in baked sun.
4. Special Features: Easy to grow, once established will multiply and create lovely winter colour. Different varieties of Snowdrop flower from Autumn to March.

Snowdrops are a green wheelbarrow plant because, although they can be tricky to get established, they are trouble-free and will multiply.

Where to plant Snowdrops and best growing conditions

Snowdrops are a mainly winter-flowering, fully hardy perennial bulbs. Planted in the right place, snowdrops will return and flower in your garden year after year.

Snowdrops are a woodland plant, which means their ideal growing conditions are partial shade, moist but well-drained soil. This is important because if the soil is too dry and the bulbs dry out, there is a real risk they will fail the following year. To grow snowdrops in drier areas, water them during dry spells until established. As a woodland plant, snowdrops are tolerant of partial shade, suitable for planting under deciduous trees and shrubs.

Plant Snowdrop bulbs about 10 cm deep, which is a little over 3 x the bulb depth, [a handy rule of thumb for all bulbs](#). Because Snowdrops prefer soil

that does not dry out, a mulch of leaf mould is ideal. Planting the bulbs a little deeper can also help to prevent the bulbs from drying out. Snowdrop bulbs hate to be baked in the hot summer sun; select a planting spot that is cool and semi-shaded in the summer.

Like Hellebores, snowdrop flowers hang down, and sometimes it's hard to see the lovely flower markings inside. Therefore, a wall or bank is ideal for planting them to clearly display the flowers. Professional growers sometimes display snowdrops with mirrors at the base to highlight the delicate flowers.

Snowdrops look good, planted in drifts to form clumps as illustrated centre. I have seen them planted to great effect around the foot of Himalayan Birch (*Betula utilis*) where the white bark chimes with the white of the snowdrops (see image below) The most popular varieties of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*, the Himalayan Birch, which have the RHS award of garden merit, are: 'Doorenbos' 'Jermyns' 'Silver Shadow' and 'Grayswood Ghost'. For a bright display, plant snowdrops with winter-flowering Aconites, see image above right.

When is the best time to plant snowdrops?

There are three ways of planting Snowdrops at different times of the year.

1. **Bulbs:** Snowdrops planted in the autumn are in the form of bulbs. This is the cheapest way, but not always the most successful. Snowdrop bulbs seem to be harder to get established than other types of bulbs. Bulbs may have been hanging around in garden centres for some time, which can cause them to dry out, and this can make them more difficult to grow.
2. **In The Green:** Snowdrops are also sold and planted 'in the green' in late February/March, which is after flowering but while the plants remain in leaf. This is not as cheap as bulbs, but it is usually more successful.

3. **Pot Ready Plants:** You can of course buy snowdrops in bloom in containers for an instant display. This is the more expensive way to buy snowdrops, but you do get the fully grown plant. One factor is that because snowdrops are small, you need a good number to make a decent display.

Whether planting established plants or in the green, plant to the same depth. This means planting so that the white part of the stem is underground. The same soil level as the container or the white stem, which has previously been underground.

Dormant bulbs are cheaper than plants but less reliable and can be planted in the summer. In addition, squirrels like the Snowdrop bulbs as well.

Most snowdrops bloom in February. But, it is worth bearing in mind that snowdrops have a long flowering season. *G. elwesii* 'Peter Gatehouse' and *G. plicatus* 'Three ships' flower in Nov/Dec. The Hiemalis group flowering in December, several varieties in January including *G. elwesii* 'Mrs Macnamara' and *monostriatus*. There are also late flowering varieties in March, *G. plicatus* 'Baxendale's Late' and even April, *G. platyphyllus*. So if you see a snowdrop flowering outside in February, it may not be the weather, it may be the variety.

Choosing Snowdrops for Your Garden: Simple Tips to Find the Best Varieties



Not all snowdrops are created equal.

In the image, the snowdrop flower is large with bold green markings. Given that snowdrops are a modest sized flower, a small variety can be diminutive, and possibly disappointing. Some reasonably sized varieties which have the RHS Award of Garden Merit are: G. 'S. Arnott' which is fragrant, G. *elwesii* slightly smaller and sometimes scented, G. *Atkinsii*, G. 'Straffan' and G. 'Ophelia' both of which usually have two flowers per bulb; and G. *Ailwyn*. G. *plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold' is unusual, white with bright yellow ovary and pedicel and also G. 'Rodmarton' which is an early double snowdrop with very distinctive green inner petals; these are just a few of the dozens of varieties on sale. It is worth checking out the size of the Snowdrop offered for sale choosing one of the larger varieties.

The RHS lists [10 award winning Snowdrops](#) a good starting point when choosing varieties to plant.

How to divide Snowdrops



Snowdrops require no maintenance and can remain undisturbed for years. However, over time, they can become

congested and benefit from being divided. You can simply dig up a few clumps of the most congested and relocate them elsewhere in the garden.

Alternatively, you could make a snowdrop basket. It looks really pretty, and you can hang it up to see the snowdrops at eye level. By digging up some snowdrops from your garden to put in hanging baskets, and a few pots here and there, you are also dividing up the snowdrops, getting another garden task done.

Snowdrops Are Good Early Pollinators



Snowdrops are often listed as "good for pollinators and bees." I like to show that it's actually true. This is not the best photograph; I took it in early February, but it does show a honeybee foraging on snowdrops.

Although a cold time of year, a mild day will bring out the bees enjoying [early flowering plants](#), snowdrops, hellebores, and crocuses are all ideal.

My snowdrops have finished. Can I mow the lawn?

Snowdrops look lovely naturalised in the lawn and will multiply over a number of years to make a great winter carpet.

The question is, after flowering, when to mow the lawn? Snowdrops may not finish flowering until February/early March, depending on variety, and meanwhile, the lawn is ready for its first mow of the season. Snowdrops are like all bulbs, as they die back the leaves feed the bulbs forming for next year's flowers. If you mow the lawn, and with it the snowdrop leaves, you will impair the leaves' ability to feed the bulb and store the nutrients for next year.

In short, don't mow until the leaves have turned yellow.

Two Reasons why your snowdrops may not return

It is disappointing when the lovely display of snowdrops carefully planted last year fail to reappear. The two most likely reasons are lack of water and squirrels.

1. **Too dry:** Snowdrops dislike dry conditions, especially when they are getting established. Take care to plant in a spot which has partial shade, not too dry and you will find a good mulch invaluable at helping to retain moisture in the soil.
2. **Squirrel :**They are such a nuisance, because they love all bulbs, including snowdrops. Plant with a squirrel barrier, which means mesh over the top to prevent the squirrel from digging the bulbs up.

Why Are Snowdrops So Hardy and frost resilient ?

Snowdrops survive the most severe weather; they are very hardy and have a selection of clever botanical features which enable them to do so.

Snowdrops have hardened tips on their leaves to help them push up through frost and snow.

The sap of snowdrops contains antifreeze proteins to prevent ice crystal damage in the plant cells during freezing spells. Instead, the plant droops and stands up again when the cold has passed.

Snowdrops multiply by bulb division, but also to a lesser extent by seed. To pollinate successfully and set seed, the seed needs to be kept dry. Snowdrops and nature have a way. The tepals are "thermotropic", which means they actually move adjusting to the temperature. If it dips below 10C the tepals close to protect the pollen, and as the temperature rises, the tepals open and shift slightly to accommodate the pollinating insects.

Such a lot packed into such a tiny plant.

Ideal Snowdrop planting combinations

Snowdrops and Hellebores



An ideal winter planting combination is snowdrops and hellebores. Both plants enjoy a degree of shade and soil that does not dry out too much.

Snowdrops and Witch hazel



A bright winter combination of witch hazel, hamamelis and snowdrops, both of which enjoy woodland conditions and partial shade.

Snowdrops and Winter aconites



Eranthis hyemalis, winter aconites are a yellow flowering perennial which are a member of the buttercup family and flower early in the year.

Snowdrops and iris reticulata



The early tiny *Iris reticulata* flowers in winter and makes a great companion for snowdrops. It is also a hardy perennial.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

February

Violet & Primrose

Composited off the internet

by

Gareth Richards

How to Grow Violet

Violets are charming and versatile flowers that can brighten up any garden or indoor space. Known for their vibrant purple hues and delicate appearance, they are a favorite among gardeners and plant enthusiasts. Growing violets is relatively simple and rewarding, making them an excellent choice for beginners and experienced gardeners alike.



With the right care and attention, these blooms can thrive and add a touch of elegance to your surroundings. In this article on how to grow violet, we will discuss everything you need to know about these lovely flowers, from their origin and types to the best growing conditions and care tips.

Origin and Types of Violets

Violets (*Viola*) have a long history dating back to ancient Greece, where they were considered symbols of love and fertility. They

are native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa but have been naturalized in many parts of the world.

There are over 500 species of violets with various colors ranging from purple to blue, white, yellow, and even bicolored blooms. The most common type is *Viola odorata* or sweet violet, known for its fragrant scent. Some other popular types include *Viola tricolor* (known as Johnny-jump-up), *Viola hederacea* (Australian native violet), and *Viola sororia* (a North American woodland violet).

Choosing the Right Location

Selecting the ideal location is essential for ensuring violets thrive in your garden. Violets generally prefer partially shaded areas, as too much direct sunlight can scorch their delicate leaves and flowers. However, some species, like *Viola tricolor*, can tolerate full sun if the soil remains consistently moist. It is important to choose a spot with well-drained, nutrient-rich soil to support healthy growth.

Avoid planting violets in areas where water tends to accumulate, as overly wet conditions can lead to root rot. By providing a balanced environment with adequate sunlight, shade, and proper soil conditions, you can create the perfect habitat for these charming and versatile flowers.

Needed Materials:

To successfully grow violets, you will need the following materials:

Potting Soil:

Violets thrive in well-drained, nutrient-rich potting soil. You can either purchase pre-made potting soil specifically for violets or create your own mix using equal parts of peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite. Avoid using garden soil, which can contain pests and diseases that could harm your violets.



Pots or Containers:

Choose pots or containers with good drainage holes. Violets prefer smaller containers, so a pot that is 3-4 inches wide should be sufficient for one plant. You can also use terracotta pots, which allow for better air circulation and help prevent the soil from becoming waterlogged.

Watering Can:

A watering can with a long spout can help you water your violets without getting the leaves wet. Try to water at the base of the plant to avoid causing damage to the delicate leaves.

Fertilizer:

To encourage healthy growth and blooming, it is recommended to fertilize your violets every 2-3 weeks during the growing season. Use a balanced fertilizer specifically designed for violets or a general houseplant fertilizer diluted to half strength.

Light Requirements:

Violets prefer bright, indirect light but can also thrive in low-light conditions. Avoid placing them in direct sunlight as it can cause their leaves to burn.

Temperature:

Violets thrive in temperatures between 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit (18-24 degrees Celsius). They are sensitive to extreme temperature changes, so avoid placing them near drafty areas or heating/cooling vents.

Pruning:

To keep your violets looking healthy and well-shaped, you may need to prune them occasionally. Remove any dead or dying leaves, as well as spent flowers. You can also trim back leggy stems to encourage new growth.

Repotting:

Violets should be repotted every 6-12 months, depending on their size and rate of growth. Use a pot that is only slightly larger than the current one and use a well-draining potting mix specifically designed for African violets. Gently loosen the roots and remove any dead or unhealthy ones before transferring to the new pot. Water thoroughly after repotting.

Propagation:

African violets can be easily propagated from leaf cuttings. Take a healthy, mature leaf and trim off the stem at an angle. Place the stem in a small container of water, making sure that the bottom of the leaf is submerged but the top remains dry. Roots should begin to form within a few weeks. Once they are well established, transplant them into soil.

9 Step-by-Step Guides on How to Grow Violet:

Step 1: Choose a Healthy Plant

Begin by selecting a healthy African violet as your starting point. Look for a plant with vibrant, evenly colored leaves and no signs of damage, pests, or disease. A strong, healthy plant will serve as the foundation for successful growth and propagation.

Avoid plants with yellowing, wilting, or spotted leaves, as these may indicate underlying health issues that could hinder development.

Step 2: Select the Right Container

Choose a container that provides adequate drainage to prevent water from pooling around the roots, which can lead to root rot. African violets thrive in small pots, as their roots prefer to be slightly confined.



Opt for a pot that is 2 to 4 inches in diameter, depending on the size of your plant. Ensure the container has drainage holes at the bottom, and consider using a plastic or glazed ceramic pot to retain the right amount of moisture.

Step 3: Prepare Potting Soil

African violets require soil that is light, well-draining, and aerated to support healthy growth. Regular garden soil is too dense and may hold too much moisture, which can harm the plant. Instead, use a specialized potting mix designed for African violets or create your own mix by combining equal parts of peat moss, vermiculite, and perlite.

This ensures the soil retains enough moisture while allowing excess water to drain properly. Before planting, moisten the potting mix slightly so it is damp but not waterlogged, providing an ideal environment for the roots to establish.

Step 4: Transplant the Plant

Gently remove the African violet from its current container and loosen the roots by lightly brushing them with your fingers.

Place the plant in the new pot, making sure the crown of the plant sits slightly above the soil level to prevent stem rot. Fill in any gaps with additional potting soil mix and gently pat down.

Step 5: Water and Fertilize

After transplanting, water the African violet thoroughly, ensuring the soil is evenly moist but not soggy. Avoid getting water on the leaves, as this can cause spotting or damage. Use room-temperature water for the best results.

Once the plant has settled, apply a diluted, balanced fertilizer specifically designed for African violets to encourage healthy

growth and blooming. Repeat fertilization every few weeks as part of regular care.

Step 6: Provide Adequate Lighting

African violets thrive in bright, indirect light. Place the plant near a window with filtered sunlight, such as through a sheer curtain, to prevent the leaves from scorching. If natural light is insufficient, consider using artificial grow lights for 12–16 hours per day to ensure optimal growth.

Rotate the plant occasionally so it receives light evenly from all sides, promoting symmetrical growth and blooming. Avoid exposing the plant to direct, harsh sunlight, as this can cause leaf damage.

Step 7: Monitor for Pests and Diseases

Like any plant, African violets can be susceptible to pests and diseases. Common pests include aphids, mealybugs, and spider mites.



Keep an eye out for any signs of infestation such as sticky residue on leaves or webbing between stems and leaves. If pests are present, treat with an organic insecticidal soap or neem oil spray.

Step 8: Prune and Propagate

To keep your African violets looking neat and tidy, prune off any dead or damaged leaves and flowers. You can also propagate new plants by [taking stem cuttings](#) from healthy, mature plants. Simply cut a few inches of stem with at least 2-3 leaves attached and place in moist potting soil. Keep the soil consistently moist until roots begin to develop.

Step 9: Enjoy Your Beautiful Blooms

With proper care, African violets can bloom year-round, providing you with stunning flowers in a variety of colors. As they are compact plants, they make great additions to windowsills or small spaces in your home. With their delicate beauty and ease of care, African violets are a popular choice for both beginner and experienced gardeners.

Following these steps on how to grow violet plants will ensure that your African violets thrive and continue to bloom for years to come. Remember to provide adequate sunlight, water, and fertilizer, and to maintain a consistent temperature and humidity level.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q1: How Often Should I Water My African Violets?

A: African violets should be watered regularly, typically once a week. However, the frequency may vary depending on factors such as temperature and humidity levels. It is important to keep the soil evenly moist but not too wet.

Q2: Can I Grow African Violets in Low Light Conditions?

A: While African violets prefer bright indirect sunlight, they can still thrive in low light conditions. Just make sure to provide them with at least 6 hours of filtered or indirect light per day.



Conclusion

African violets are beautiful and versatile plants that can thrive with the right care and attention. By providing them with proper watering, adequate lighting, and a bit of routine maintenance, these charming flowers can brighten up any indoor space.

Whether you are a seasoned plant enthusiast or a beginner, African violets offer a rewarding and enjoyable experience for all. Thanks for reading this article on how to grow violet.

How To Plant And Grow Primroses: 'Great For Pots And Can Be Placed In Full Sun'

The Primrose, that voiceless herald of spring, is strongly identified with the UK.

An abundance of relatively new cultivar series means that Primroses are available in numerous colours in tones pastel and saturated, in double forms, and even in variegated tones.

Overview

Botanical Name	<i>Primula vulgaris</i>
Common Name(s)	Primula; Primrose
Plant Type	Perennial Flower
Native Area	West & Southern Europe
Hardiness Rating	H4-H7
Foliage	Semi-evergreen
Flowers	Various colours – often yellow
When To Sow	March, April, September, October
Flowering Months	January, February, March, April, May

Spring just wouldn't be complete without primroses in an English country garden – correction, in any English garden.

Indeed, Primroses are so strongly identified with England that although *P. vulgaris* is native to – besides the British Isles – most of Europe it is called 'English Primrose' all over the world.

Its subspecies *P. vulgaris* subsp. *vulgaris*, also known as Common Primrose, extends its native range to near Asia.



Habitat & Growing Conditions

Moisture, shade, and cool temperatures – these three factors combine to make the ideal habitat for Primroses.

Thus, these plants are very often found in and around damp woodlands close to bodies of water.

And if there is one genus for which the virtually standard caution against heavy clay soils and wet soils can be dispensed with it, it is the English Primrose, Common Primrose, and [most Primrose varieties](#), most particularly the Giant Cowslip.



The majority of Primrose varieties prefers moist-to-damp soils, the only difference between the varieties being one of degree.

Almost all varieties are somewhat acidophilic with the difference between varieties, again, being one of degree.

The suitable pH for these plants ranges from 6.1-7.0. rich humus- and compost-based soils are best for these plants.



P. 'Gold Laced' Group (Polyanthus)



P. belarina 'Valentine'

Planting Primrose

When To Plant

Autumn and spring are the best seasons to grow Primroses by any method by which a particular variety can be grown (or planted or propagated).

Seeds are best sown in late autumn, otherwise in early spring.



Dividing the plants or separating offsets is another method of propagation.

Depending on the variety this is best done in spring, autumn, or either and both.

For example, you should divide *P. denticulata* in spring but *P. vulgaris* Belarina series cultivars in autumn.

Where To Plant

Where you plant a Primrose plant depends fairly strongly on the particular variety.

P. vulgaris and its subspecies are great for mass plantings, are suitable for rock gardens, for growing on verges and slopes, and even as a delightful ground cover.

On the other hand, plants from the series that bear intensely-coloured and truly showy flowers, such as the 'Danova' series, are ideally suited as bedding display plants, for borders and edges, and as decorative container plants.



As for the highly striking varieties like 'Perle von Bottrop', 'Zebra Blue', and 'Gold-Laced' Group, these can be grown and displayed as true specimen plants in their own rights.

Plant Care

Soil Requirements

A very good soil in which to grow the vast majority of Primroses would be a slightly acidic fertile clay-based loam with humus and peat moss.

It should be kept moist and especially so in hot or dry weather.

As opposed to the species, particularly 'Cowslip', Primrose cultivars and series should be planted in soils with very good drainage.

Sunlight

Primroses are known as shade-loving plants and in the main this is true.



They will grow well in partial shade and dappled sunlight.

However, some varieties tend to one or another extreme.

For instance, 'Perle von Bottrop' prefers part shade to full shade whereas 'Giant Cowslip' prefers part sun to full sun.

Most mature plants will do very well in temperatures between 12.5-25°C.

“Primulas are great naturalised (particularly species) or grown in pots,” says Master Horticulturist Peter Lickorish.

“In my experience, pots can be placed in full sun positions because, in early spring, the intensity of the sunlight is unlikely to be a problem.

“If planting out afterwards, make sure to bear in mind that they will need more shade in the summer months and plant accordingly.”

Feeding

Primroses do not need fertiliser in British conditions particularly if the soil is rich, organic, and is amended with humus or organic manure.

That said, cultivars and series varieties will benefit from fertilising.

You can fertilise once every fortnight from the start to the close of blooming season.

Do so by lightly sprinkling a general fertiliser at the base of the plant.

Common Problems

As Primula Primrose varieties are so numerous and disparate, their resistance or susceptibility to pests varies quite widely.

Though they are healthy plants in general, quite a number of pests may attack them.



These include slugs, aphids, vine weevil, eelworms, leafhoppers and glasshouse red spider mite.

The diseases that can affect these plants are primula brown core, grey mould, and leaf spot.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

March

Daffodil & Jonquil

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Daffodil

How to grow beautiful daffodils: Care, planting and propagation made easy

Including expert tips on common pests and plant diseases as well as pruning



You know winter is nearly over when **daffodils** begin to emerge in your garden.

These popular **spring bulbs** are most well-known for their yellow flowers but, depending on the variety, they also bloom in white, pink, orange, or bi-colour.

Also known as narcissus, daffodils are native to the UK, Europe and North Africa and are planted in the **autumn** (the bulbs need to overwinter underground in order to bloom).

If you live in an area with plenty of deer and **rodents** who like to feast on your garden bulbs, you can plant daffodil bulbs as they won't bother these plants.

Daffodils Basic Info

- **Common names:** Daffodil, Narcissus
- **Botanical name:** *Narcissus*
- **Plant family:** *Amaryllidaceae*
- **Plant Type:** Bulb
- **Toxicity:** Toxic to cats, dogs and people
- **Sun exposure:** Full sun
- **Soil type:** Loose and well-drained
- **Preferred Soil/PH:** Acidic, neutral (6.0-7.0)
- **Mature size:** 6 to 30 inches tall, 6 to 12 inches wide
- **Bloom time:** Late winter, spring
- **Native areas:** UK, Africa, Europe
- **Colours:** Yellow, White, Orange

•**Hardiness Zone:** 4 to 8



Daffodil care

Daffodils make wonderful bulbs for beginner gardeners as they don't need special care.

"A daffodil will thrive when it has the right environment to grow in," says Jay Hutchins, vice president of the **American Daffodil Society**. "As long as the bulbs are planted at the right time and

are watered properly during their growing season, you'll likely have a bounty of daffodil blooms."

Light

Daffodils are sun-loving plants and need plenty of light to grow and thrive. Pick an area that gets full sun — at least 6 hours of sun is good, but 8 hours would be better," says Jay.

Soil

Grow daffodils in loose, well-draining soil to minimise the chances of bulbs rotting.

"Daffodils need good drainage, especially during their summer dormancy or they may rot," says Hutchins. If you need to improve your soil's drainage, add some sand and compost.

"The sand will help with drainage, and the compost will add nutrients into the dead wasteland of the clay soil," he says.



Temperature

Daffodil bulbs should be planted once temperatures are cooler, typically in autumn, before the ground freezes, depending on your geographical region. Daffodil bulbs need cold weather and a period of cold dormancy to produce blooms. If you live in an area that doesn't have frost or cold temperatures, it may be challenging to have your daffodil bulbs bloom.

Water

Daffodils need plenty of water during their growing period in late winter and spring. Water after you plant the bulbs. Make sure the soil stays moist until the rainy season but it should

never be soggy. Once they bloom, continue to water them for several weeks, and then stop watering your daffodils.

Fertiliser

Many plants can benefit from an extra-nutrient boost, and daffodils are no exception. Hutchins says plant experts typically recommend gardeners "feed in the autumn."

The American Daffodil Society recommends a complete fertiliser that is low in nitrogen. It should be mixed in well with the soil, and shouldn't directly touch the bulbs.

Jay isn't a proponent of chemical fertilisers. It's difficult to provide the right dosage and easy to over-fertilise the bulbs, causing them to burn, he says.

If you do decide to use a chemical fertiliser, "it is strongly suggested that you wear gloves and a mask during application."

But: "why would you apply something that is so risky to your own health or that of your family?"

He recommends using compost for your daffodils instead of chemical-based fertiliser. "Compost contains all the nutrients

and minerals that work well with almost all plants," he says.

"You can't overdo it."

Are daffodils toxic to pets?

Yes, daffodils are toxic to cats, dogs and horses, and if ingested can cause diarrhoea and vomiting. The bulbs are the most poisonous and if large amounts are consumed, it can lead to cardiac arrhythmias, convulsions, low blood pressure, and tremors.

When to plant daffodils

Bulbs should be planted in the autumn, though the month can vary based on geographical location and first frost dates. "The best time to plant daffodils is after the first frost," says Jays. This is normally around early November in the UK.

You don't want to plant bulbs too early as this can trigger the roots to grow. "If this is done too soon, they may not be able to handle over-abundant moisture, or they may be tricked into thinking it's time to start growing instead of root production," he says. When the soil is cold, growth is halted until the soil

warms up again in the spring, triggering the growing process, he adds.

To store your bulbs until you're ready to plant them, simply keep them in a dark, cool, dry place, such as a basement, where they will remain dormant.



How to plant daffodils

Daffodil bulbs can be planted directly in the soil or in containers. When growing bulbs in pots, make sure the pot is

deep enough. Typically a 7.5-litre pot is enough for the roots to grow and spread out.

Space and depth are key to increasing your chances of successful blooming. The depth and width you should plant bulbs varies based on the bulb size. There's an easy rule of thumb to know how to plant them.

"Daffodils should be planted three times the bulb height deep and three times the bulb width apart," says Jay.

Providing ample space acts as a protective blanket. "This depth protects them from possible harsh winter conditions," he says, "And the width allows the space to grow but also produces a nice, dense display."

Bulbs need to be planted with the pointy side up, with the root structure facing down. If you accidentally plant them upside down, won't worry; They'll still grow the right way, though it may take them a little longer.

Do you need to prune daffodils?

After a daffodil blooms and fades, you can cut the old flowers.

There are two schools of thought on pruning: some suggest

cutting back the entire flower, to keep your garden looking pristine, while others recommend only removing the blooms.

Jay recommends only removing expired blooms rather than the rest of the plant.

"Even though the bloom has completed, the bulb's foliage is still photosynthesising and adding needed energy for next spring's bloom," he says. "This is why you should also not braid the foliage together (as some gardeners do) because you're decreasing the surface space for photosynthesis to occur."

When the foliage turns yellow, it's a sign the bulb is dormant.

He recommends waiting till this time before removing it.



How to propagate daffodils

One way to **propagate** daffodils is by splitting or dividing the bulb. There are varying opinions on how frequently you should divide daffodils or if you even need to do it. The American Daffodil Society suggests dividing bulbs every couple of years.

Here's how to propagate daffodils by division

1. During late spring, once the leaves begin to turn yellow and dry—usually within a month and a half to two months—snip the leaves down to three inches.
2. Loosen the soil with a garden fork and carefully dig up the bulb.
3. Remove the daffodil bulb and shake off any soil. Look for soft spots and pest damage on the bulbs. If there are any issues with the bulbs, toss them.
4. To divide the bulbs, you'll carefully split or break off newer bulbs that have formed on the 'parent' bulb by twisting and moving them in the opposite direction until they break off. Bulbs should be at least one and a half

inches in diameter for chances to bloom the next year.

Smaller bulbs will take longer to produce flowers.

5. You can choose to replant new bulbs or save them for the following season. If you save them, store bulbs in a cool dark area.

Can you grow daffodils from seed?

Daffodils can be grown from seed but it takes a significant amount of time — five to six years — for seeds to become viable bulbs. This technique isn't common, especially among hobby gardeners. Professional horticulturists do sometimes use this method.

Should you divide daffodils?

When it comes to dividing daffodils, there are different perspectives on whether this is something that is needed.

Dividing is the process of splitting bulbs or removing newer bulbs from the original bulb. "If you planted 25 bulbs and got 25 blooms the first year, but in year 5 there are 15 blooms, feel free to divide them if that makes you happy," says Hutchins.

When bulbs produce fewer blooms over the years it's due to a lack of nutrients in the soil, he says. "If you're not feeding every fall, your 25 bulbs have depleted all the nutrients from that area and they're starving," says Hutchins. "What a bulb will do is sacrifice the energy for bloom creation, and instead create foliage that goes up to gather more sunlight for food."

Jay suggests making sure your bulbs have adequate nutrients instead of dividing them.

"We have daffodils that have been in the ground for over 80 years. We've never dug them up or divided them," he says. He says they feed them every autumn. "This is far easier on your body and it takes far less time — so, you choose. I know what I'd pick!"



Should I dig up bulbs or leave them in the ground?

Once daffodils bloom and fade, the show is over. They won't rebloom and the leaves will start to turn yellow. If you're focused on aesthetics, you may be tempted to trim the leaves but let them be. The yellowing leaves will continue to absorb sunlight, feeding the bulbs for the following year's flowers.

Now, you can dig up the bulbs, let them dry and store them to plant in the fall. This frees up space in the garden for summer flowers. Another option is to leave the bulbs in the ground.

Common pests and plant diseases

Daffodils are hardy plants and don't usually have issues with pests or diseases but can be afflicted by bulb rot, and narcissus yellow strip virus. Pests include bulb mites and narcissus bulb fly.

The narcissus bulb fly looks like a bumblebee and female adults lay eggs on the top of the bulbs and the leaves. When the eggs hatch, small grubs chomp their way to the bulbs. "Adult bulb flies prefer warm, sheltered environments, making daffodils in shaded or exposed areas less susceptible to infestation," says

Jay. One trick to prevent females from laying their eggs near your daffodils is compacted soil. "After the daffodils have flowered, compact the soil around the plants to hinder female flies from laying their eggs," he says. "When it comes time to cut back your foliage, either rake the soil or add more soil to cover any holes that might allow access through the stem."

One of the best ways to avoid these flies is to choose quality bulbs. "To prevent large narcissus bulb flies from entering your garden, purchase firm, high-quality bulbs from reputable suppliers," he says.

Check on your plants periodically to look for any pests. "In the spring, look for signs of an infestation like premature wilting or yellowing of the foliage, stunted growth, holes in the bulbs, and the presence of the larvae," he adds. "Any plants showing signs of bulb fly attack should be dug up and disposed of before the larvae leave the bulbs to pupate in the soil," he says.

Common Daffodil Diseases

Bulb Rot

Bulbs planted in soil that doesn't drain well can be prone to rotting. This is known as bulb rot. If you notice this, remove and throw out the rotting bulbs to prevent them from spreading or affecting other bulbs.

Narcissus Yellow Strip Virus

If you notice yellow and brown stripes on the leaves, this is a sign that your daffodils are afflicted with the Narcissus Yellow Strip Virus. Unfortunately, there is nothing to remedy your bulbs. Remove affected bulbs and discard them to prevent the virus from spreading to other bulbs.

Note: Do not place diseased bulbs in the compost bin as it can potentially spread wherever you use finished compost in your garden. Toss disease or afflicted bulbs in the trash.

Troubleshooting Daffodils

Yellowing leaves

After daffodils bloom, the leaves begin to turn yellow. Yellowing leaves is a sign to dig up the bulbs.

Yellowing leaves can also happen if it's been attacked by the yellow narcissus strip virus. If this is the case, dig up the bulbs and toss them in the trash to prevent the virus from spreading to other bulbs.

Bulbs Drying Out

Daffodils grown in extremely hot or cold regions can cause the bulbs to dry out before they have a chance to bloom.

Brown Leaves

Daffodils need plenty of water during their growing season. Soil that isn't kept moist can affect the leaves and flowers. If daffodils don't have enough water, this can cause leaves to turn brown or even split. Consider placing a layer of mulch to help retain more moisture in the soil as well as provide a protective layer in the colder months

How to increase chances of blooming



Daffodils typically bloom when their care needs are met. If daffodils aren't flowering, here are some possible issues:

Quality bulbs

"I'd start with a quality flower bulb supplier," says Jay. A high-quality bulb will influence how well your daffodils grow and thrive in your garden.

Bulbs planted upside down

The orientation of the bulb is essential for daffodils to flower. Bulbs need to be planted with the pointed end up.

Bulbs too small

The smaller the bulb, the longer it takes to bloom.

Insufficient sunlight

Daffodils need plenty of sunlight to produce blooms. Although they can handle dappled sunlight, too much shade can prevent them from flowering.

Types of daffodils

There are over 40 Narcissus species and thousands of registered cultivars. Home gardeners have plenty of choices for choosing and growing daffodil bulbs. Daffodils come in different colours, shapes, and sizes and are classified into 13 divisions.

Frequently asked questions

What is the best month to plant daffodil bulbs?

Autumn is the best time to plant daffodil bulbs. The best month will depend on your geographical region. Typically, you'll plant daffodil bulbs between September and November.

Where do daffodils grow best?

Daffodils need and love sunlight. Choose an area in your garden that gets at least 6 hours of sunlight per day. They can grow with some dapple sunlight but to have success, make sure they're receiving the minimum hours of sunlight per day.

How can you grow daffodils?

Daffodils grow from bulbs and thrive in an area that receives plenty of sun—a minimum of six hours per day.

Jonquil Growing Guide

Narcissus cyclamineus, Narcissus jonquilla



Soil

Fertile, well-drained soil, with a neutral to slightly acidic pH.

Position

Full sun to partial shade. When choosing a site, keep in mind that the flowers may twist to face the sun in low light situations.

Frost tolerant

Yes, jonquils are hardy perennial bulbs, tolerating cold to -34°C F (-30°F).

Feeding

The need to feed jonquils depends on the site. In poor soil, feed plants with a mulch of compost in early spring when they are actively growing.

Spacing

Single Plants: 10cm (4") each way (minimum)

Rows: 10cm (4") with 10cm (4") row gap (minimum)

Sow and Plant

Plant dormant bulbs in groups of 5 or more in autumn after the soil has lost its summer warmth, covering them with 5cm (2 inches) of soil. The bulbs will slowly grow roots through winter and bloom first thing in spring. Thin congested clumps in autumn, or as soon as the first green shoots appear in late winter, by digging up and then replanting some of the bulbs elsewhere.

Our [Garden Planner](#) can produce a personalised calendar of when to sow, plant and harvest for your area.

Notes

Jonquil is the common name for small, early daffodils such as the yellow 'Tete-a-Tete' variety, which is remarkable for its light fragrance. Numerous other varieties are available in white, yellow, or orange. Jonquils bloom in late winter, and often get covered with snow. Cold snaps can injure stems that are holding blossoms, but rarely hurt the plants. Because many jonquil blossoms nod downward, they are ideal for slightly elevated spots, or you can cut them and enjoy the flowers indoors. Jonquils are at their best when allowed to naturalise, often forming thick clumps that persist for many years.

Harvesting

Gather stems for use in cut arrangements as you need them. Allow jonquil foliage time to grow after the flowers have gone to insure strong blooming the next year.

Troubleshooting

Jonquils have few pest problems. Like other narcissus, the bulbs are resistant to rodents, rabbits and deer.

Pests which Affect Jonquil



Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

April

Daisy & Sweet Pea

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

How To Plant, Grow, And Care For Daisies

Daisies belong to the family *Asteraceae* whose members have composite flowers. They make excellent cut flowers for vases or garden ornamentals due to their striking blooms. There are over a thousand genera under this family, but they share similar care requirements.

- Daisies thrive in moist and well-drained soils in an area where they can receive at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily.
- They grow best at temperatures between 65 and 80 °F (18 and 27 °C).
- Depending on the zone, daisies can be grown as annuals in zones 4-8 or as short-lived perennials in zones 9-11.

There are numerous daisy varieties, but this article will focus on those that are commonly grown in the US, including the English, Shasta, ox-eye, Gerber, African, and painted daisies. I'll share tried-and-tested tips on how to grow them in your home garden successfully.



Quick Guide

Common Name(s)	Daisy <i>Bellis spp.</i> (English daisies) <i>Leucanthemum spp.</i> (Shasta or Ox-eye daisies)
Botanical Name	<i>Gerbera spp.</i> (Gerber daisies) <i>Arctotis spp.</i> (African daisies) <i>Tanacetum spp.</i> (Painted daisies)
Family	Asteraceae
Plant Type	Herbaceous perennial (flower)
Native Area	Asia, Africa, Europe
USDA Hardiness	Annual in zones 4-8
Zones	Tender biennial or short-lived perennial in zones 9-11
Height & Spread	0.5-4 feet (15-120 cm) tall 1-2 feet (30-60 cm) wide
Bloom Time	Spring and/or summer
Flower Structure	Composite (with a central disk and rays of petals)
Color	White, yellow, red, pink, purple, blue
Sun Exposure	Full sun (at least 6 hours of direct sunlight)

	Partial shade from the afternoon sun
Soil Type	Moist and well-drained (loamy sand) Rich in organic matter
Soil pH	6.0-8.0
Watering	Moderate An inch of water weekly for in-ground plants As soon as the upper 1-2 inches (2.5-5 cm) of the soil is dry for potted plants
Pests, Diseases, Common Problems	Aphids, whiteflies, spider mites, slugs, earwigs, rabbit, deer Root or crown rot, blight, powdery mildew Some species are naturally resistant to pests and fungal diseases due to pyrethrins (i.e., painted daisies)
Toxicity	Toxic to cats and dogs (except for Gerbera daisies) Ingestion of leaves can lead to confusion, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, or muscle spasms Contact with sap may cause dermatitis

Daisies: An Overview

Daisies are native to regions with mild summers and winters. That's why they're popularly grown as annuals in the US.

In warm, frost-free regions, these herbaceous perennials can **live for 2-3 years** in the outdoor garden. They may persist longer in the garden, but the flowers will be sparse as they get older.

Flower Anatomy and Nyctinastic Behaviors

Daisies are popular for their **composite flower pattern** where the central disk contains about a hundred small florets and is surrounded by a single or multiple layers of ray petals. [Each](#)

floret in the central disk contains one pistil with a stigma on top splitting into a Y shape.

Each flower grows on a stalk 2-15 inches (5-38 cm) long. The stems and stalks of daisy flowers **don't have thorns**. This makes them perfect as cut flowers for vases and bouquets.

As sun-loving plants, some daisy species exhibit **nyctinastic behaviors** in their blooms.

This manifests in the following responses to light:

- **The ray florets open at sunrise and close at night.** This behavior is also sometimes associated with the plant's defense mechanism. It's commonly found in African daisies whose flowers have a greenish coloration underneath the petals. Closing the flowers protects them from herbivores at night.

- **The flowers move their heads to follow the sun's direction during the day.** You may notice the flower heads facing east in the morning and looking upward at midday.

Daisy flowers can vary in color depending on the species. Hybrids from the same species may also have different colors due to multiple factors, such as mutation, soil pH, and temperature.

Although most ray florets have solid colors, you may come across daisies with pink tips or striped florets due to the factors mentioned.



Here’s a brief guide on the traits of the most common varieties grown in the US:

Variety	Size (Height & Spread)	Color	Flower Size (diameter)	Bloom Time
English daisy (<i>B. perennis</i>)	0.5-1 foot (15-30 cm) tall and wide	Yellow center and white rays	1 inch (2.5 cm) for classic	Spring and summer
		Some may have pink-tipped or entirely pink rays.	3-5 inches (7.5-13 cm) for larger cultivars	
Shasta daisy (<i>L. superbum</i>)	1-4 feet (30-120 cm) tall 1-2 feet (30-60 cm) wide	Yellow center and white rays	2-5 inches (5-13 cm)	Spring and summer
Gerber daisy (<i>G. jamesonii</i>)	0.5-1.5 feet (15-45 cm) tall	White, yellow, pink, orange, red	3-4 inches (7.5-10 cm)	Spring to autumn

	1 foot (30 cm) wide	Some have bi-colored rays.		
Ox-eye daisy (<i>L. vulgare</i>)	1-3 feet (30-90 cm) tall 1 foot (30 cm) wide	Yellow center and white rays	0.5-1 inch (1.3-2.5 cm)	Late spring to summer
African daisy (<i>Arctotis hybrida</i>)	1-2 feet (30-60 cm) tall 1 foot (30 cm) wide	White, yellow, pink, orange, red	1-3 inches (2.5-7.5 cm)	Summer and fall
Painted daisy (<i>T. coccineum</i>)	2-3 feet (60-90 cm) tall 1-1.5 feet (30-45 cm) wide	Mostly with yellow center Red, magenta, white, or pink rays	1-3 inches (2.5-7.5 cm)	Summer

Symbolism and Cultural Use

The classic white daisy with a yellow center is a **symbol of purity and innocence**.

Historically, the English daisy was popular among children and young ladies. They used it to [make daisy chains](#) or pick on the petals for the age-old game of “he loves me, he loves me not.”

Modern daisies and the wide selection of flower colors have changed their meaning and cultural use.

Here are the symbolisms and applications associated with different daisy colors:

●**Pink:** Friendship, romance, feminine energy. Lighter shades are best used for friendly or sisterly relations. Darker shades like magenta often hint at romantic intentions.

●**Red:** Romantic love. Red daisies are a low-cost alternative to roses for bridal bouquets.

●**Yellow:** Friendship, happiness, well-wishes. Yellow daisies are pleasant congratulatory or get-well-soon gifts for mothers, sisters, or female friends.

●**Orange:** Happiness. They're perfect for cheering up female acquaintances.

In addition to all the positive energies and messages behind daisy flowers, you'll be surprised how easy they are to grow and maintain.



Preparing to Plant Daisies

Proper planning and vision are necessary when growing daisies in your garden. You may have some flexibility when growing them in pots because you can move them around.

However, daisies established in flower beds don't like being transplanted. Although they'll survive the transfer, they will likely have fewer blooms.

So here are some things to keep in mind when preparing for growing daisies:

Selecting the Right Location

You have to consider the **soil type and light intensity** when choosing the right location.

Soil Type

Daisies can grow in different types of soil with a wide pH range (6.0-8.0) as long as there's good drainage.

However, I've noticed that they tend to do best in **loamy sand with an almost neutral pH (6.5-7.0)** because it has good drainage, moisture retention, and nutrient accessibility.

African daisies from arid regions will do well in sandy soil because they're more drought-tolerant. Either way, your plant needs a substrate that's **rich in organic matter** to promote flower growth.

Light Intensity

Daisies like **at least 6 hours of direct sunlight** daily to produce and open flower buds. However, too much sunlight (accompanied by dry conditions) can cause dehydration and sunburn.

Choose an **east-facing garden** to give your daisies gentle morning light. This will also encourage the flowers to open in the morning, especially the nyctinastic English and African varieties.

If you have a western or southern garden, you can install a shade cover over your flower bed at midday. Avoid a northern garden because it receives the least amount of daylight. Your daisies will be less likely to produce flower buds in such an area.

Soil Preparation

After choosing the planting location, your soil may require some amendments.

Here are some tips:

Soil Texture

To strike a perfect balance between drainage and moisture retention, you must amend the soil accordingly.

●**Loose soil:** Work 2-3 inches (5-7.6 cm) of compost into the upper 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) of soil to improve moisture retention and add organic matter.

●**Clayey soil:** Wait until the soil is partially dry before working 2-3 inches (5-7.6 cm) of coarse sand evenly into the upper 6-8 inches (15-20 cm). You can add compost as mulch later to improve water infiltration.

●**Pots:** I recommend a potting mix containing equal parts coarse sand/perlite, compost, and coco peat.

Nutrient Requirements

As flowering plants, daisies need phosphorus-rich fertilizers to encourage bud formation and blooming.

You can amend the soil accordingly depending on its properties:

●**Poor soil:** Work a slow-release 10-10-10 NPK fertilizer or finished compost into the upper 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) of the soil. You can do this 1-2 weeks before planting as you till and weed the soil before planting.

●**Average soil or pots:** Sprinkle bone meal powder over the soil surface and rake it in about a week before planting.

Soil pH

Although daisies can thrive in a wide range of pH, they can suffer from [iron or manganese deficiency](#) when grown in alkaline soil (pH over 7.5). That's why the optimum pH range is 6.5-7.0.

Use lime to raise the soil pH or elemental sulfur to lower it.

If your soil pH needs amending, I recommend doing it in the fall because it can take a few months before these substances can alter the soil pH.

Best Time for Planting

The best time to plant daisies is in spring when soil temperatures are **steadily above 60 °F (15.6 °C)**. The seeds will not sprout at lower temperatures.

Planting them late in the season will lead to a lack of blooms in the first year. The high summer temperatures will halt bud formation and the cold autumn temperatures will slow down growth. The first batch of blooms will then come out in the spring of next year.

If you live in a cold region (USDA zones 4-8) and want to grow daisies as annuals, I recommend starting your seeds indoors 4-6 weeks before the last spring frost.

This will help ensure your plant bears flowers by early summer. If you have mild summers, you may even enjoy the blooms well into the early fall.

Planting

You can start daisies from seeds or seedlings.

Here's a step-by-step guide for the following methods:

Starting Seeds

You can do this indoors using a **3 or 5-gallon (11.4-19 l) pot per plant**. Daisies reach maturity within 2-3 months and don't require frequent repotting, so choose a pot that will

accommodate its mature size. More importantly, it should have drainage holes.

For direct sowing into the garden soil or flower bed, you can refer to the steps below.

1. Rake the soil surface and sprinkle the seeds over it.

Alternatively, you can poke holes $\frac{1}{8}$ inch (3.2 mm) deep and 6 inches (15 cm) apart. You can then sow two seeds in each hole.

2. Lightly cover the seeds with about $\frac{1}{8}$ inches (3.2 mm) of soil to allow access to sunlight.

3. Water them using the fine mist of a garden hose or watering can to avoid dislodging the seeds. Do this early in the morning, ensuring that the soil is moist at least 3 inches (7.5 cm) deep.

4. Check the soil regularly to keep the upper inch (2.5 cm) moist. You may need to water every 1-2 days. The seeds will germinate within 10-20 days with enough moisture.

5. After about 6-8 weeks, thin the seedlings by spacing them 1-2 feet (30-60 cm) apart depending on the plant's expected spread.

Planting Seedlings

If you live in a cold region and start the seeds indoors, you can transplant the seedlings into the ground **after the last frost**.

Follow these steps:

1. Soak the rootball in water for about one minute to loosen and remove the potting mix.
2. Dig a hole in the ground to accommodate the rootball. It should be as deep as the rootball and about 4-6 inches (10-15 cm) wider.
3. When transplanting multiple seedlings, keep the holes 1-2 feet (30-60 cm) apart.
4. Place the roots into the hole, ensuring the crown is in line with the ground's surface level.
5. Spread the roots and fill the hole back in with soil.
6. Carefully but firmly tamp the soil to remove air pockets and keep the plant upright.
7. Water the plant deeply.
8. Apply 1-2 inches (2.5-5 cm) of [organic mulch](#). As perennials, daisies can benefit from long-lasting mulch materials like bark or wood chips. However, when grown as annuals, you can use compost or sawdust. Keep the mulch about an inch (2.5 cm) away from the base of the stem to prevent crown rot.



Watering Needs

As the plant becomes established (at least 6 inches or 15 cm tall), you can reduce the watering frequency and increase the watering amount.

Here are some practical tips:

- On average, a full-grown daisy plant needs **an inch (2.5 cm) of water weekly**. That's enough to moisten the ground 6-8 inches (15-20 cm) deep.
- Seasonal and environmental changes can affect how much water your plant consumes and how fast the soil dries out. A good practice is to water the plant **when the soil is dry 1-2 inches (2.5-5 cm) deep**.

- Replenish the mulch as soon as it loses volume to ensure your plant remains well-hydrated.
- Water your plant early in the morning.
- Avoid overhead watering to prevent problems with pests or diseases. Water the soil directly.

Sunlight, Temperature, and Humidity

Daisies may not grow as well in US climates with extreme winters and summers.

To ensure your plant grows well and produces abundant flowers, remember the following parameters and tips:

● **Sunlight:** Give your plant at least 6 hours of unobstructed morning light. If your garden receives scorching midday sun, install shade covers that you can unfurl during the hottest part of the day.

● **Temperature:** Daisies thrive when temperatures remain between 65 and 80 °F (18 and 27 °C). During hot days, (over 90 °F or 32 °C), you can keep the shade cover on for most of the day.

● **Humidity:** Your plant likes moderate humidity levels between 30 and 50%. It can tolerate lower humidity if it's well-watered. If it's too humid out, just make sure you don't wet the foliage or overwater your plant.

Fertilization

Daisies grown in rich or properly amended soil typically **don't** need additional fertilizers in their first year. However, in the second year of growth, the soil may be depleted of nutrients.

Follow these tips for an abundant yield:

- Apply a thin but even layer of bone meal around the base of the plant at the start of the growing season in spring. Rake the organic fertilizer in and water your plant as usual.
- Feed your plant with **half-strength 0-10-10 NPK liquid fertilizer** every month during spring and summer.
- Go for products with micronutrients like iron, manganese, and zinc.

Pruning and Maintenance

Daisies can spread by reseeding. Pots are excellent in controlling [invasive species](#) like Shasta and ox-eye daisies, both belonging to the genus *Leucanthemum*. In-ground, these species can spread wildly when left unpruned.

Regular pruning is important if you don't have enough garden space for new growths or simply want to prevent your plant from spreading. It also helps give your plant a bushier look or increase the number of blooms.

Remember the pruning and maintenance tips below for your plant's optimum health and appearance.

Regular Deadheading

You can do this by **pinching the neck** of the fading flowers before they completely dry out. Alternatively, you can use sterile pruning shears. Removing the spent blooms will make way for the new buds to bloom after around 2-3 weeks.



Harvesting Cut Flowers

You can also collect flowers for vases and bouquets when they're in full bloom.

To select the best flowers for display, follow these steps:

1. Look for freshly blooming flowers whose stalks are at least 12 inches (30 cm) long.

2. Make a **diagonal cut (45°)** close to the base.

3. Remove any leaves from the bottom 4-6 inches (10-15 cm). This will be submerged in water.

4. Place them in a sterile vase with filtered water.

5. Replace the water every 3-4 days.

With proper care, cut daisies can last 1-2 weeks.

Fall Pruning

Fall pruning practices can vary depending on the climate in your area and whether you're growing daisies as annuals or perennials.

Here are some guidelines:

● **Annuals:** Cut the plant back 1-2 inches (2.5-5 cm) to the ground after the first frost. This eliminates the dying foliage that pests might overwinter in.

● **Perennials:** Prune the plant in the fall by a third to half its size. This is a good opportunity to keep your plant in the shape you want. In frost-free regions, fall pruning may produce another flush of flowers.

Weeding

Daisies have shallow, fibrous roots, making them **weak against perennial weeds** with deeper roots and aggressive growth rates.

Applying around 2 inches (5 cm) of organic mulch around your plants should be enough to suppress weeds. However, it still helps to keep an eye out for weeds that may grow through the mulch layer and remove them from the roots as soon as you spot them.

These weeds might steal the soil nutrients and moisture intended for your daisies, resulting in sparse blooms.

Propagation

There are three ways to propagate daisies: through seeds, cuttings, and divisions.

Seed Propagation

When propagating through seeds, you simply have to wait until the flowers dry out on their stalks. You can then **collect the seeds** and store them in paper envelopes in a cool, dry, place. They will remain viable for 2-5 years.

You can plant the seeds in the spring following the steps discussed earlier.

Although this method is simple enough, one downside is there's no guarantee the seeds will get the same traits as the mother plant. Daisies readily cross-pollinate with neighboring plants belonging to the same genus or species, producing a new variety.

Collecting and Planting Cuttings

Conversely, the advantage of propagating daisies from cuttings is that they will give you new plants identical to the mother plant.

The best time to collect cuttings is in the **middle of spring** when they're actively growing or **during the fall pruning** so they have enough time to grow roots.

Here are the steps:

1. Water the plant a day before collecting cuttings.
2. Locate a healthy stem about 5-6 inches (13-15 cm) long with at least 4 nodes. The leaves should be green and void of pests or discoloration.
3. Cut the stem at a **45° angle** about half an inch (1.3 cm) below the bottom node.
4. Remove the leaves from the last two nodes and any flower buds from the top.

5. Dip the bottom of the cutting in a rooting hormone or organic options like pure honey or cinnamon powder.

6. Plant the bottom inch (2.5 cm) of the cutting in your regular daisy potting mix or soil.

7. When planting multiple cuttings, space them about 6 inches (15 cm) apart.

8. Water deeply and wait until the upper inch (2.5 cm) is dry before watering again.

9. Place in an area with partial shade to prevent the cuttings from drying out.

Within the next 4-6 weeks, your cuttings will have enough roots and new growth.

Keep them indoors if you have freezing winters and move them outdoors after the last spring frost. Gradually acclimate your plant to outdoor conditions before transplanting them into the ground.

You can also keep them in pots to make it easier to move them back indoors the following winter.

Dividing and Repotting

Daisies growing in large flower pots can still reseed within their containers. If your pot is crowded with plants but has sparse

blooms, you might have a mix of young and old plants competing for nutrients and moisture.

In this case, it's best to divide and repot them. Here's how:

1. Water the plant 1-2 days before dividing.

2. Loosen the soil from the edges of the pot using a flat knife.

3. If the pot is too large to tilt, scoop out the rootball with your gloved hands.

4. Loosen the soil around the roots and locate spots for division. The roots of individual plants should readily separate but avoid forcing them apart to prevent damaging the roots.

5. Prepare a container for each plant that can accommodate its full size. You can also plant multiple divisions in a large container if you give them at least 6 inches (15 cm) of space. Alternatively, you can plant them in the ground.

6. Dig a hole as deep as the rootball and about 4-6 inches (10-15 cm) wider.

7. Place and spread the roots over the hole and cover with soil.

8. Water your plant deeply.



Seasonal Care

Daisies don't like extreme winter and summer temperatures. They will need extra care during these seasons to keep them coming back.

Winter Care

When growing perennial daisies in colder regions, you need to **cover your plant with burlap**. The material should be large enough to drape over your plant and touch the ground. This will help release warm air from the soil and trap it inside the burlap.

You can also bring potted daisies indoors in winter and keep them in a bright room with temperatures around 65-75 °F (18-24 °C).

Even in frost-free regions, when nighttime temperatures drop below 45 °F (7 °C), cover your plant with burlap and reduce watering accordingly.

Summer Care

If the summers in your area go above 90 °F (32 °C), it's best to **install shade covers** to protect your plants from extreme heat. You may also need to increase the watering frequency if the soil dries out too quickly.

Common Pests, Diseases, and Problems

Some daisy varieties, such as painted daises, have natural protection from pests and diseases due to the pyrethrin in their leaves.

Non-resistant varieties, on the other hand, may have a few problems.

Pests

Here's a list of common daisy pests and how to manage them:

●**Aphids** are tiny, translucent (green, white, or brown) insects about 1/8 inches (3.2 mm) in size. You can see them underneath the leaves or along the herbaceous stems. Spraying your plant with a neem oil spray at night once a week for 4-6 weeks should eliminate these pests.

●**Whiteflies** are winged insects with cottony white covering. Their larvae can feed on leaves but they're also vulnerable to neem oil.

●**Spider mites** also hide underneath leaf surfaces. They're easy to identify due to the white webbing structures they create, earning them their name. Luckily, neem oil is also effective against them.

●**Slugs** can easily access low-growing daisy leaves and feed on them. Even if you can't see slugs, you'll know their mark from the slimy trails on the leaves and irregularly shaped feeding holes on the leaves. Catch them at night when the soil is moist (rain or watering) using tweezers and drop them in a bucket of soapy water. You can also use [liquid coffee](#) as a soil drench to eliminate slugs.

●**Earwigs** are reddish brown with pincers at the tip of their abdomen. They're attracted to flowers but only come out at night. You can catch them by placing a can of tuna with vegetable oil. They will be attracted to the scent and you can dump them in soapy water. Replenish the oil every night.

●**Deer and rabbits** can also feed on daisies. You can prevent them from attacking your plant by installing fences around your garden.

Diseases

Due to their low-lying foliage, daisy leaves are susceptible to moisture-related infections, such as the following:

●**Root or crown rot** occurs when mulch materials are too close to the crown and the soil is always wet. Poor soil drainage and

overwatering also largely contribute to these conditions. These are fatal conditions for daisies. You can save your plant by propagating healthy cuttings.

●**Blight or gray mold** is caused by the fungus *[Botrytis cinerea](#)*. It occurs when your plant is kept in moist conditions and has poor air circulation, especially in spring and fall. The disease causes wilting and decaying leaves, sometimes with gray mold. It's hard to treat because the fungus is resistant to many commercial fungicides.

●**Powdery mildew** is another fungal disease that occurs when you keep the foliage wet. It manifests as a white covering over the leaf surface, preventing photosynthesis. The affected leaves will then turn yellow and die. You can prune severely infected leaves and spray neem oil weekly as treatment and prevention.

These diseases can be troublesome to treat, so it's best to prevent them from taking hold of your plant in the first place.

Here are some ways to prevent them:

- Amend the soil accordingly to improve drainage.
- Space your plants properly to facilitate better air circulation.
- Prune your plants in the fall to shape your plants and remove overlapping leaves.
- Avoid wetting the leaves when watering.

●Avoid overwatering your plant, especially when there's rain in the forecast.

Problems

Other common problems to watch out for when growing daisies include:

Wilting

Wilting usually occurs when your plant is **dehydrated from extreme heat and light**. Provide your plant some shade and increase watering frequency. You can also apply mulch to the ground to prevent the soil from drying out too fast.



Discoloration

Daisy leaves turn yellow or brown due to various reasons:

●**Watering issues:** Overwatering can leave brown, water-soaked spots on the leaf surface. On the other hand, underwatering turns the leaf edges yellow or brown and crisp. Adjust your watering accordingly based on the amount of rainfall, light intensity, and air temperatures.

●**Sunburn:** Brown, crisp spots on various places along the leaves (especially the upper ones exposed to sunlight) indicate sunburn.

●**Nutrient deficiency:** Lack of iron or manganese will cause chlorosis or uneven yellowing on the leaf surface (usually along the veins). Ensure your fertilizer has trace amounts of these nutrients and the soil pH is around 6.5. Nitrogen deficiency can also cause leaf yellowing. However, be careful not to overfeed your plant with nitrogen as it can hinder flowering. Bone meal or compost has enough nitrogen.

Lack of Blooms

As discussed, too much nitrogen can prevent your plant from putting out flower buds. Nitrogen encourages your plant to put out more green growth, causing a noticeable lack of blooms.

You can confirm this by checking your soil NPK values using an at-home soil test kit. Follow the instructions on the product label to get an accurate reading.

Once confirmed, feed your plant with a **0-10-10 NPK foliar fertilizer** for faster absorption and to encourage flowering.

Beneficial Uses and Companion Planting

Daisy flowers are attractive to bees and butterflies, making them excellent companions for spring flowering or fruiting vegetables like **tomatoes and peppers**. They also share similar soil and light requirements.

On the other hand, daisies can benefit from the following companion plants:

- **Marigolds** have a pungent odor, which is effective at repelling rabbits and common pests like aphids.
- **Sunflowers** belong to the same family as daisies. These taller relative are also sun-loving and can provide the shorter daisies with some shade during the hottest part of the day, especially in a western or southern garden. Moreover, their yellow rays are a great contrast to the classic daisy's white rays.
- **Salvia** is slightly taller at about [5-6 feet](#) (1.5-1.8 m). You can plant them facing west and the daisies in the east so the latter is shielded from the afternoon sun. It can also repel rabbits and deer. Moreover, you can choose purple or lavender salvia varieties to complement your yellow or orange daisies.

Final Thoughts

There are thousands of daisy varieties worldwide and hundreds grown in the US.

Nevertheless, they share similar care requirements, such as the following:

- Moist, well-draining soil rich in organic matter
- Full sun (or partial shade in western or southern gardens)
- Temperatures around 65-80 °F (18-27 °C)
- Moderate watering (an inch weekly)
- Phosphorus-rich fertilizer or bone meal

Daisies are essentially low-maintenance plants that will reward you with beautiful blooms. Growing them in mild climates will result in bountiful blooms that will keep coming back year after year.

Sweet Pea

Hints on growing

There are many ways to grow Sweet Peas, but what follows are suggestions that have been proved to work for summer flowering varieties in the UK.

Sow seed in October and November, if in the south or midlands, or in Northern areas from January to February.

Later sowings are possible if growing for garden decoration and cutting for the house.

Sowing

Seeds should be sown and covered with 1 cm of compost. A general multi-purpose compost is sufficient. Seed composts often have insufficient air spaces and are best avoided.

There are three options for containers:

1. Put 8 seeds in a 12.5 cm pot, reducing to the best 6 following germination. These can be left in the pots until planting time.
2. Put one seed per cell in deep Rootainers, which have 8x4 cells. These are 12.5cm deep and the plants are left in them until planting time.
3. Put 50 seeds in a standard seed tray, arranged 10x5. Once the seedlings are about 2.5cm high, they will need to be transplanted into one of the above containers for growing on.

Do not soak seeds in water before sowing as this may reduce germination. Germination is best at about 15C to 18C and can take place in 7 to 14 days.



Seedlings emerging in root trainers

Early growth

Gently water in your seeds after sowing. Further watering is then best avoided until germination can be seen, in order to reduce the risk of disease and rotting off.

Autumn sown seedlings should be placed in a cold frame or cold greenhouse to over-winter. They are hardy annuals and will stand moderate frost down to -5C and must be kept cool on sunny winter days. Spring sown should be kept in a cool greenhouse. Protect against mice.



Seedlings growing on in cold greenhouse

Stopping

Spring sown plants should have the growing tips of the primary stem pinched out after two pairs of leaves have been produced, to ensure the development of side shoots. Autumn sown plants will normally produce side shoots naturally but the primary stem should be removed before planting out.



Plant pinched out showing side shoots

Planting out

The planting area should have been prepared in Autumn.

Autumn-sown plants should be planted out about mid-March

and spring sown a month or so later, depending on your

location. Individual plants should be placed in holes and the soil

level brought back to a level below the first side shoot and

planted firmly but lightly to ensure good soil contact.



Before planting out



Seedlings ready to go out

Growing on

If plants are to be grown on the cordon system, once the side shoots are about 20 cm long decide which is the strongest stem, not necessarily the longest, and then remove all other side shoots. (Sometimes two stems may be retained).

As growth progresses the stem(s) should be tied to their canes, using rings or other methods. Side shoots and tendrils should be removed.

Only Spencers for showing have to be grown by this method. Otherwise use netting or wire supports and leave tendrils in place to allow the plants to climb.

Once flowers appear they should be cut regularly or dead headed to ensure no seeds are produced, otherwise flowering will cease.



Sweet peas planted out and tied in



Picking a bloom

Layering will be necessary for cordon grown plants. Untie the plants and lay them along the ground; retie several canes further along, depending on height. This will prevent them from growing taller than their supports.



Layered cordons

Non-cordon plants grown more for garden decoration require less intensive care, but still need tying in as the side branches develop and perhaps a little thinning out.



Sweet peas flowering in a garden border



Growing in a polytunnel

Feeding and watering

Little feeding is needed if the ground has been suitably prepared. These plants fix nitrogen from the atmosphere so additional fertilisers should be high potash and phosphate, to encourage flowers rather than green growth. Liquid feed at dilute concentrations (half or even quarter strength) can be applied at root level or as a foliar feed. Care should be taken to ensure that roots do not dry out. Under very warm conditions it can be beneficial to spray, below flower level.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

May

Hawthorn & Lilly-of-the-Valley

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

HAWTHORN(*CRATAEGUS MONOGYNA*)

Named after the month in which it blooms and a sign that spring is turning to summer. The pale green leaves of this hedgerow staple are often the first to appear in spring, with an explosion of pretty pale-pink blossom in May. It simply teems with wildlife from bugs to birds.

What does it look like ?













Quick facts

Common names: common hawthorn, hawthorn, May tree, one-seed hawthorn, whitethorn, quickthorn

Scientific name: *Crataegus monogyna*

Family: Rosaceae

Origin: native

Mature trees can reach a height of 15m and are characterised by their dense, thorny habit, though they can grow as a small tree with a single stem. The bark is brown-grey, knotted and fissured, and twigs are slender and brown and covered in thorns. It often hybridises with the UK's other native hawthorn, Midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*). Both species are similar and can be hard to tell apart.

Look out for: the deeply lobed leaves, spiny twigs and haws (berries).

Identified in winter by: the spines which emerge from the same

point as the buds; distinguishing them from blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) which has buds on the spines in winter .

Leaves

Around 6cm in length and comprised of toothed lobes, which cut at least halfway to the middle or 'mid-rib'. They turn yellow before falling in autumn.

Flowers

Hawthorns are hermaphrodite, meaning both male and female reproductive parts are contained within each flower. Flowers are highly scented, white or occasionally pink with five petals, and grow in flat-topped clusters.

Fruits

Once pollinated by insects, they develop into deep-red fruits known as 'haws'.

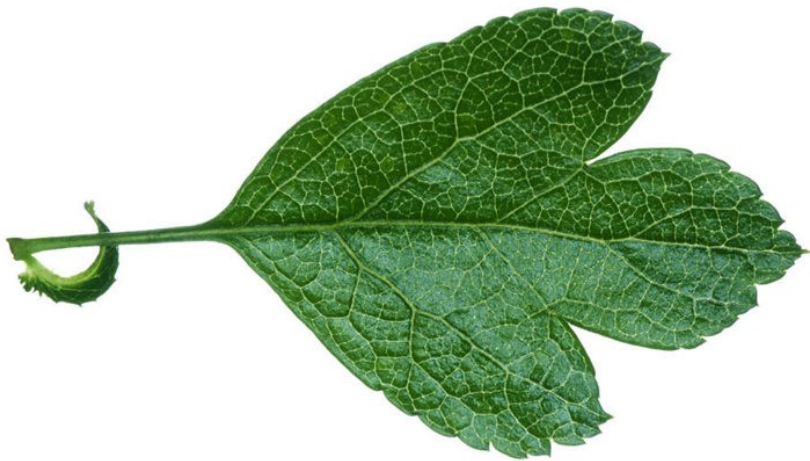
Not to be confused with:

Midland hawthorn (*Crataegus laevigata*). The flowers of common hawthorn have a single stigma, whereas Midland hawthorn has two. The common hawthorn fruits have a single seed, whereas the fruits of Midland hawthorn have two seeds. The leaves of common hawthorn are not as deeply cut.

HAWTHORN, MIDLAND(*CRATAEGUS LAEVIGATA*)

Dense and pungent, but with fruits that are enjoyed by birds and humans alike, the Midland hawthorn is a supremely useful tree whose natural range is not fully understood.















Where to find hawthorn

This species is commonly found growing in hedgerows, woodland and scrub. It will grow in most soils, but flowers and fruits best in full sun.

Value to wildlife

Common hawthorn can support hundreds of other species. It is the foodplant for caterpillars of moths, including the hawthorn,

orchard ermine, pear leaf blister, rhomboid tortrix, light emerald, lackey, vapourer, fruitlet-mining tortrix, small eggar and lappet moths. Its flowers are eaten by dormice and provide nectar and pollen for bees and other pollinating insects. The haws are rich in antioxidants and are eaten by migrating birds, such as redwings, fieldfares and thrushes, as well as small mammals.

The dense, thorny foliage makes fantastic nesting shelter for many species of bird.

Mythology and symbolism

Hawthorn is a pagan symbol of fertility and has ancient associations with May Day. It was the ancestor of the Maypole and its leaves and flowers the source of May Day garlands as well as appearing in the wreath of the Green Man.

Hawthorn was never brought into the home. It was believed that bringing hawthorn blossom inside would be followed by illness and death, and in medieval times it was said that

hawthorn blossom smelled like the Great Plague. Botanists later learned that the chemical trimethylamine in hawthorn blossom is also one of the first chemicals formed in decaying animal tissue, so it is not surprising that hawthorn flowers are associated with death.

Its blossoming marks the point at which spring turns into summer, and the old saying 'Cast ne'er a clout ere May is out' almost certainly refers to the opening of hawthorn flowers rather than the end of the month.

Uses of hawthorn

Common hawthorn timber is a creamy-brown colour, finely grained and very hard. It can be used in turnery and engraving and to make veneers and cabinets, as well as boxes, tool handles and boat parts. It also makes good firewood and charcoal, and has a reputation for burning at high temperatures.

The young leaves, flower buds and young flowers are all edible.

They can be added to green salads and grated root salads. The developing flower buds are particularly good. The haws can be eaten raw but may cause mild stomach upset. They are most commonly used to make jellies, wines and ketchups.

It has long been grown as a hedging plant and is a popular choice in wildlife gardens.

Threats and conservation

Hawthorn may be prone to aphid attack, gall mites and the bacterial disease, fireblight.

Overview of Lily of the Valley

Lily of the valley, scientifically known as **Convallaria majalis**, is a charming woodland flowering plant. It is recognized for its **sweetly scented, bell-shaped white flowers** that bloom in spring.

Characteristics

- **Flowers:** Bell-shaped and white, often drooping to one side.
- **Leaves:** Oval-shaped, basal, and grow in pairs.
- **Height:** Typically reaches up to 25 cm (10 inches).

- **Berries:** Produces bright red berries that are also poisonous.

Habitat and Growth Conditions

Lily of the valley thrives in specific environments:

- **Preferred Soil:** Favors chalky and well-drained soils, but can grow in various soil types.
- **Light Requirements:** Grows best in partial shade but can tolerate full shade.
- **Hardiness Zones:** Hardy in USDA zones 3-9.

Growth Tips

- **Planting:** Best planted in early spring while dormant.
- **Maintenance:** Requires minimal care once established; it can spread quickly and crowd out weeds.

Toxicity

All parts of the lily of the valley plant are **highly poisonous**.

Ingesting any part can lead to symptoms such as:

- Abdominal pain
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Irregular heartbeats

Cultural Significance

Lily of the valley holds various meanings and traditions:

- Symbolism:** Represents happiness, purity, and renewal. It is often included in wedding bouquets for good luck.
- Celebrations:** In France, it is customary to sell lily of the valley on May 1st, known as La Fête du Muguet, as a symbol of spring.

Conclusion

Lily of the valley is not only a beautiful addition to gardens but also carries significant cultural and historical importance.

However, caution is advised due to its toxic nature.

Lily of the valley, scientifically known as **Convallaria majalis**, is traditionally used for various heart-related conditions, including **congestive heart failure, irregular heart rhythms, and cardiac edema**. However, it is important to note that all parts of the plant are **poisonous**, and it should only be used under the supervision of a qualified medical professional.

Lily of the valley is **highly toxic**, containing cardiac glycosides that can cause severe heart issues, even in small amounts.

Unlike some other poisonous plants, all parts of lily of the valley, including its flowers and berries, are dangerous if ingested.

Lily of the Valley thrives in **moist, well-drained soil** and prefers **partial shade** but can adapt to full sun or full shade depending on moisture levels. It is important to avoid waterlogged conditions, as this plant does not tolerate soggy soil well.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for
June
Honeysuckle & Roses

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Overview of Honeysuckle

Honeysuckle is a genus of flowering plants known for their sweetly scented, tubular flowers and sweet nectar. The genus includes approximately 158 species, which are primarily found in northern regions of North America, Eurasia, and North Africa. These plants can be categorized as either shrubs or twining vines.

Characteristics

Physical Features

- **Flowers:** Honeysuckle flowers are typically tubular and come in various colors, often attracting pollinators like bees and hummingbirds.
- **Leaves:** The leaves are usually opposite, simple, and oval-shaped, ranging from 1 to 10 cm in length. Most species are deciduous, but some are evergreen.
- **Fruit:** The plants produce berries that can be red, blue, or black. While many honeysuckle berries are mildly poisonous, a few species, like *Lonicera caerulea*, have edible berries.

Growth Habits

- **Types:** Honeysuckles can be climbing (deciduous, semi-evergreen, or evergreen) or shrubby (deciduous or evergreen).

●**Habitat:** They thrive in woodland areas and along hedgerows, often twining around other plants for support.

Uses and Benefits

Ornamental Value

●Honeysuckles are popular in gardens for their fragrant flowers and ability to cover unsightly structures. They bloom profusely in summer and are valued for their aesthetic appeal.

Ecological Importance

●The flowers attract various pollinators, including bees and moths, while the berries provide food for birds in the autumn.

Medicinal Uses

●In traditional medicine, particularly in Chinese herbal practices, honeysuckle is used for its anti-inflammatory and antiviral properties. It is often employed to treat infections and febrile diseases.

Invasive Species

Some honeysuckle species, such as *Lonicera japonica*, have become invasive outside their native ranges, particularly in North America and other regions, leading to ecological concerns.

Honeysuckle plants thrive in **well-drained soil** and prefer **full sun to partial shade**. They benefit from a sheltered location and should be planted with enough space to allow for vigorous growth

Different honeysuckle species vary significantly in fragrance and color. **Lonicera periclymenum** is known for its sweet, lingering perfume and comes in shades of cream, gold, or coral, while **Lonicera japonica** has an intense, sugary-sweet scent with white flowers that turn yellow. Other fragrant varieties include '**Gold Flame**', which has pale pink flowers fading to creamy yellow, and '**Graham Thomas**', noted for its pale yellow blooms and strong fragrance.

Planting honeysuckle in gardens can have both positive and negative ecological impacts. **While honeysuckle attracts pollinators and provides food and nesting sites for wildlife, some varieties, particularly non-native ones like Amur honeysuckle, can become invasive and disrupt local ecosystems by outcompeting native plants.**

Conclusion

Honeysuckle plants are not only beautiful and fragrant but also play significant roles in ecosystems and traditional medicine. Their diverse species offer various uses, making them a valuable addition to gardens and natural landscapes.

the complete rose colour meanings guide



Coveted through the ages for its simple beauty and intoxicating fragrance, there's no better way to send a heartfelt message than with the classic rose. Roses make great tokens of affection however depending on their colour can have different meanings. Whether you are selecting a rose for a friend, family member or special someone, picking the perfect rose colour can be a great way to send a message using no words at all. To aid in your decision and help you make a "wow" impression we've rounded up all the different rose colour meanings as well as common rose traditions to compliment them.

What Do Different Rose Colours Symbolize?

1. White Roses



To begin with our rose colour meanings guide, let's travel from lightest rose colours to darkest. White roses are traditionally associated with marriages and new beginnings, but their quiet beauty has also made them a gesture of remembrance. Suited to reverent occasions, the white rose is a fitting way to honour a friend or loved one in recognition of a new beginning or a farewell. Their pure colour conveys respect, pays homage to new starts, and expresses hope for the future. When the occasion calls for reverence a bouquet of white roses is a perfect way to say, "I'm thinking of you."

White Rose Meaning: Purity, Chastity and Innocence

2. Ivory Roses



Ivory while similar, is an off-white colour that appears a shade darker. Commonly thought of as a cream or eggshell color, ivory roses are often used to make an elegant presentation and can provide a calming vibe and sense of luxury. The ivory colour also represents charm and can be a great gift for someone with exquisite taste and style. This colour meaning would be a great selection for letting someone know you care, without romantic intentions.

Ivory Rose Meaning: Charm, Luxury and Elegance

3. Yellow Roses



While the yellow rose once symbolized jealousy and greed, it now represents friendship and care. Like the warm sunflower, gifting a yellow rose to a friend conveys warmth and affection and can be a great way to show your delight. Yellow roses also symbolize remembrance and a warm memory or a token of appreciation to another.

Yellow Rose Meaning: Friendship, Care and Remembrance

4. Peach Roses



Peach roses are known for showing thanks and expressing gratitude. They are commonly given to celebrate a business deal or arrangement and can be a sign of loyalty. Peach roses are a “sweet” surprise due to their warm colour and are a great gift for showing adoration to a young daughter or friend.

Peach Rose Meaning: Modesty, Genuineness and Sympathy

5. Orange Roses



With their blazing energy, orange roses are the wild child of the rose family. Orange roses represent fascination and pride. Whatever feelings you might be bubbling over with—enthusiasm, passion, gratitude—orange roses will get the message across with both oomph and elegance.

Orange Rose Meaning: Passion, Desire and Fierce Love

6. Pink Roses



A classic symbol of grace and elegance, the pink rose is often given as a token of admiration and appreciation. They are the gentlest of roses and relay that message through their grace. Whether they're for your best friend, fiancée or ever-dependable co-worker, a pink rose bouquet will create a bright spot in a special someone's day.

Pink Rose Meaning: Sweetness, Admiration and Joy

7. Red Roses



Long associated with beauty and perfection, red roses are a time-honoured way to say “I love you.” Red roses convey passion and a strong romantic love for another person. Whether it’s for a birthday, Valentine’s Day or just to express appreciation on any day, there’s no better way than a bouquet of red roses to share your feelings.

Red Rose Meaning: Ultimate Love, Passion and Longing

8. Lavender Roses



Lavender roses are often seen in spring and represent love at first sight. These roses are used to express fascination and adoration. Their beauty is known to convey enchantment and their meaning can differ by shade. Darker shades of lavender roses convey a sense of regal, majesty and splendour.

Lavender Rose Meaning: Majesty, Fascination and Splendour

9. Green Roses



Green roses represent harmony, opulence and fertility. Like the lavender rose these colours are seen in spring and can represent rebirth and tranquility. As a gift, green roses symbolize best wishes for a prosperous new life or wishes for the recovery of good health.

Green Rose Meaning: Harmony, Peace and Health

10. Blue Roses



Blue roses, like the black rose, represent mystery and illusion from their mesmerizing hue. In terms of love, blue roses embody ultimate desire and lust. Given as a gift they also represent unattainable love but unfathomable favour.

Blue Rose Meaning : Unattainable Love, Desire and Mystery

11. Black Roses



Black roses, commonly used during Halloween, represent death and the ending of a feeling, idea, or relationship. Like blue roses, black roses are not created naturally so they represent mystery and elusiveness. Spooky! If you are to receive or give black roses you are conveying the end of your relations with another or signifying death.

Black Rose Meaning: Death, Elusiveness and Farewell

12. Multi-coloured Roses



Multi-coloured roses, also known as "rainbow roses," are unique gifts that represent happiness and joy. The brightness and range of colours in multi-coloured roses convey fun and make great gifts for birthdays, anniversaries, or a new baby. Like mixed rose colour bouquets, multi-coloured roses can be a great way to share multiple emotions and messages into one gift.

13. Mixed Rose Colour Meanings



Mixing different rose colours into a bouquet is a personalized way to combine many messages into one display. Mixing pink and green roses can symbolize gentleness and harmony which would be a great gift to show love and affection to a family member or kind friend. Mixing red and ivory roses could mean your love is intense and tasteful. Sending a message through rose colour meanings is an extraordinary way to share your true feelings.

Rose Traditions and Meanings



Once you've decided on a colour to convey the message you wish to send, consider a few other elements that play a part in your rose bouquet or flower selection. A few options include giving a single rose or dozen roses, a long-stemmed rose or a petite rose! Peruse common rose traditions and their meanings below to select a type of gift that will compliment your message!

One Dozen Roses

A dozen roses traditionally send a message of love and gratitude. As the significance of a dozen roses has become more prevalent, it has become the standard for rose arrangements for all occasions. When giving a dozen roses you are conveying the message “Be mine” or “I love you.”

Two Dozen Roses

With double the number of roses than a traditional dozen, a bouquet of two dozen roses carries double the meaning! Two dozen roses as a romantic gift say “I belong to you.” For other occasions, two dozen roses add to the extravagance of the gift.

Long-stemmed Roses

Long-stemmed roses carry deep meaning and are often the most desired and appreciated type of rose. A bouquet of long-stemmed roses signifies, “I will remember you always.” A single long-stemmed rose imparts a message of simplicity, such as “I love you deeply.”

Petite Roses

The petite roses are known for their miniature blooms, but their smaller size does not lessen their significance or their impact.

Petite roses are also known as “sweetheart” roses. As their name implies, these roses are a symbol of affection perfect for a sweetheart. Petite roses are also more economical and can be re-potted and pruned for longevity.

Now that you are familiar with rose colour meanings and common rose traditions you can find a complementary pair of your choosing. Whether you are creating a bouquet for a friend or surprising a special someone do so with rose colour meanings sure to get the message across.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

July

Larkspur & Water Lily

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

How to Grow Larkspur from Seed

Larkspur is one of those flowers that makes a cottage garden feel truly complete. With its tall, elegant spires in shades of violet, blue, pink, white and deepest plum, it has a painterly quality — as though it belongs in a watercolour rather than an actual garden. The good news? It's wonderfully straightforward to grow, costs very little, and once you've grown it, you'll wonder how you ever managed without it.

This guide will walk you through everything you need to know, from sowing your first seeds to cutting great armfuls for the vase. Don't be daunted — larkspur is a friend to beginners and a joy to experienced gardeners alike.

When & How to Sow

Larkspur is a hardy annual, which means it can tolerate frost — and actually prefers a cold spell to help it germinate well. This makes it ideal for direct sowing outdoors, and it really doesn't

like having its roots disturbed, so sowing where it is to flower is absolutely the right approach.

You have two ideal sowing windows in the UK:

Autumn Sowing (September – October) —
Recommended

Sowing in autumn gives larkspur the cold stratification it loves.

Seeds overwinter in the ground, germinate earlier in spring, and produce bigger, stronger plants that flower earlier and for longer. This is the method cottage gardeners have used for generations, and it really does give the best results.

Spring Sowing (February – April)

If you miss the autumn window, don't worry. Sow in early spring — February to April works well — ideally giving the seeds a few cold nights to help trigger germination. You can also pop the seed packet in the fridge for a week before sowing to mimic this cold period.

Step by step:

- 1. Choose your spot.** Larkspur likes a sunny or lightly shaded position with well-drained soil. It dislikes heavy, waterlogged ground — if your soil is clay-heavy, work in some grit or compost before sowing.
- 2. Prepare the soil.** Rake the area to a fine tilth (a crumbly, even texture). Remove any large stones or debris. Larkspur doesn't need rich soil — in fact, too much fertility can encourage leafy growth at the expense of flowers.
- 3. Sow thinly and directly.** Scatter seeds thinly across the surface or sow in shallow drills around 6mm deep. Try not to sow too densely — overcrowding leads to weaker plants and encourages mildew.
- 4. Label clearly.** This sounds obvious, but larkspur seedlings look much like weeds when they first emerge — a label will save you accidentally pulling them up!

5. **Water gently.** Use a watering can with a fine rose to avoid washing seeds away. Then leave them to it — larkspur germinates best with minimal fuss.

6. **Thin the seedlings.** Once they're a few centimetres tall and have their first true leaves, thin to around 20–30cm apart. It feels drastic, but the remaining plants will be all the better for it. You can compost the thinnings rather than transplanting, as larkspur really doesn't like being moved.

Beginner's Reassurance

Don't worry if germination feels slow — larkspur can take two to four weeks, sometimes longer in cold conditions. As long as the soil doesn't dry out completely, they'll come. Patience is rewarded beautifully here.

Growing On *Tips*

Once your larkspur seedlings are established, they're pleasingly low-maintenance. Here's what to keep an eye on through the growing season.

Watering

Water young seedlings regularly, especially during dry spells in spring. Once established, larkspur is reasonably drought-tolerant — water during prolonged dry periods but avoid keeping the soil constantly wet, which can lead to rot.

Feeding

Larkspur generally doesn't need feeding — it can actually perform better in leaner soils. If your soil is very poor, a single application of a balanced general fertiliser in spring will be more than enough. Avoid high-nitrogen feeds, which push leaves at the expense of flowers.

Support

Taller varieties — particularly those over 90cm — may benefit from a few twigs or bamboo canes pushed in around them for support, especially in more exposed gardens. This is worth doing early before the plants get too tall. Shorter varieties are usually self-supporting in a sheltered spot.

Deadheading

Larkspur doesn't benefit from deadheading in the same way as some other flowers — it blooms on a central spike and then sets seed. If you want a longer display, let some plants seed naturally and cut others for the vase. You can allow plants to self-seed for a colony next year.

Self-Seeding Tip

One of larkspur's loveliest qualities is that it self-seeds freely. If you leave a few plants to set seed and drop naturally, you'll find a colony establishing itself over years — meaning you may barely need to sow at all. Just allow the seed heads to ripen and shake on the ground before you clear spent plants.

Common Problems & How to Fix Them

Larkspur is generally a tough, trouble-free plant, but here are the issues you're most likely to encounter and how to deal with them calmly.

PROBLEM	LIKELY CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Poor germination	Seeds too warm, too old, or sown too deep	Sow shallowly (6mm max), ensure seeds are fresh, and try a cold spell before sowing — either autumn sowing or a week in the fridge first.
Powdery mildew on leaves	Poor air circulation, overcrowding, dry at roots	Thin plants to improve airflow, water at the base rather than overhead, and remove affected leaves. Mildew usually appears late in the season and rarely ruins the display entirely.
Slugs & snails	Moist conditions, young seedlings	Young seedlings are most vulnerable. Use organic slug pellets, copper tape, or set beer traps around the emerging plants. Once established, larkspur is less susceptible.
Tall, floppy plants	Too much shade, too much nitrogen, insufficient support	Choose a sunnier position next time, avoid rich feeds, and stake taller varieties early in the season with twigs or canes.
Plants not flowering	Too much shade, overcrowding, or late sowing	Ensure plants receive enough sun, thin to the recommended spacing, and try earlier sowing — either autumn or early spring — next year.
Sparse or small blooms	Overcrowding or over-feeding	Thin more aggressively (30cm between plants) and avoid feeding unless soil is very poor. Lean conditions produce the best flowering.

Important Note

All parts of the larkspur plant are toxic if ingested, so do wash your hands after handling and keep out of reach of young children and pets. This is worth knowing, but needn't put you off growing it — it's perfectly safe to grow and handle with simple care.

When to *Expect Flowers*

If you sow in autumn, you can expect larkspur to begin flowering from late May or June — sometimes even a little earlier in a mild year. Spring-sown plants will typically flower from late June through to August.

The display usually lasts around four to six weeks per plant, though a bed with a mix of autumn and spring-sown plants can give you a longer combined season. Once flowering is over, plants set seed and die — this is normal, and is just the signal to let them self-seed or collect seeds for next year.

JAN	
FEB	
MAR	Sowing window
APR	Sowing window
MAY	
JUN	Flowering period
JUL	Flowering period
AUG	Flowering period
SEP	
OCT	Sowing window
NOV	
DEC	

Succession Sowing

For the longest possible display, sow in both autumn and early spring. The two batches will flower at slightly different times, giving you a more extended season of colour and cutting material.

Cutting & *Drying*

Larkspur is one of the finest cut flowers a cottage garden can produce, and it dries beautifully too — making it a true double-duty plant for anyone who loves bringing the garden indoors.

For cutting fresh

Cut larkspur spires when around a third to half of the flowers on the stem are open — the remaining buds will continue to open in the vase, giving you days of enjoyment. Cut early in the morning when the stems are well hydrated, and place immediately into deep, cool water. Change the water every couple of days and snip the ends at an angle to extend vase life. You can expect fresh larkspur to last around five to eight days in a good condition.

For drying

Larkspur is genuinely one of the best flowers for drying — it holds its colour exceptionally well, with blues and purples in particular remaining vivid for months. Cut stems when most of the flowers on the spike are open but before they start to drop. Strip the lower leaves, bundle in small groups of five to ten stems, and hang upside down in a warm, dry, well-ventilated

space away from direct sunlight. They'll be ready in two to three weeks.

Perfect For

Dried larkspur is wonderful in wreaths, dried flower arrangements, botanical frames, and as a pressed flower. It's also a popular choice for wedding flowers and handmade gifts — and because you've grown it yourself, it carries an extra layer of meaning.

Cutting Garden Tip

Regular cutting actually encourages larkspur to produce more side shoots and prolongs flowering. Don't be shy with the scissors — the more you cut, the more you get. Think of it as doing the plant a favour.



Water Lily

If you are a fan of water lilies, you've probably heard of the artist Monet. Even if you are not particularly familiar with the flower, you may have heard of his painting series called 'The Water Lilies', or 'Nymphéas'.

If someone could vouch for the beauty and versatility of the watery lily family, it was Monet.

His paintings depict thousands of water-topping flowers; their elegance, tranquility, their range of colors, and their beauty.

Alongside the French painter, hundreds of cultures and people around the world have been celebrating water lilies for centuries



Part of the reason behind their popularity is that water lilies are notoriously easy to grow, and can be found almost anywhere in the world.

Also, they have been around for hundreds of millions of years, so they are pretty impressive flowers.

Because these flowers are so impressively stunning, it is not surprising that people want to know more about them.

If you are thinking about growing your own water lilies in your garden pond, or if you just want to learn a little more about them, keep on reading!

We will discuss the different varieties of lily that are available, their colors, and show you what they look like.

Water Lily Families

Water lilies exist in three different family groups, and these are the Nymphaeaceae, the Hydatellaceae, and the Cabombaceae families.

Wow, they're a bit of a mouthful, aren't they? Within each of these three families are a set of subspecies, all of which are unique in color, shape, and size.

In total, there are over fifty species of water lily in the world. Most species of water lilies fall into the Nymphaeaceae family. The official names of the subspecies in this family are Barclaya, Nuphar, Ondinea, Victoria, Euryale, and Nymphaea. However, there are so many subspecies within these groups that we will focus more on each flower's individual name.

Water Lily Colours



When you think of water lilies, you probably picture some light pink flowers atop light green lily pads, right? And you would not be wrong!

So many water lilies are light pink in color. However, what many people do not know is that water lilies exist in a whole range of colors and shades – there is at least one lily for every color of the rainbow!

As well as pink lilies, you can find yellow, orange, blue, purple, red, white, and even black lilies.

Even the colors of lily pads vary; and they can range from very light green to deep, dark green, and some are even red or purple! Just like all flowers, water lilies come in a range of shapes, sizes, and colors, and each flower is unique.

Nymphaeaceae Water Lilies

Because this family of water lilies has the most subspecies, we are going to focus on the Nymphaeaceae family's subspecies in this article. Let's take a closer look at some of them below.

Nymphaea Darwin

More commonly referred to as the Pink Water Lily, this is one of the most common species of water lilies.

As you might have guessed, the petals of this flower are shades of pink. Its inner petals tend to be a light, sweet pink, while its outer petals are a darker bright pink.

Inside these petals are bright yellow stamens, which create a beautiful contrast with the pink.

The flowers are fairly large and can reach up to seven inches tall.

They are also extremely fragrant, and delightful to smell. These pretty flowers sit atop rounded bright green lily pads that support them on the water surface.

Unfortunately, these beautiful flowers never last long and are usually only open for around four days at a time.

Rembrandt Water Lily

Artists and water lilies seem to go hand in hand! This lily was named after the artist, Rembrandt, supposedly because it

mimics his painting style. If you are a fan of vivid pinks, you will love this water lily.

Its petals range in color from deep, dark pinks to bright shades of fuchsia, and they are eye-catching, to say the least.

These flowers love the sun, so only bloom during the daytime.

These are no simple little flowers, though, these babies can grow up to five feet in diameter! When they are full-sized, they really are hard to miss.

Despite their scale and bright color, these water lilies are still as elegant as any other.

Nymphaea Capensis

More simply named the Cape Blue Water Lily, this is the perfect flower for those who are not a huge fan of pink.

This flower has petals that range in color from deep purple to light indigo, and a yellow and purple center. Unlike many of the water lily species, this flower does not have rounded, delicate petals, but instead has thin and pointed ones.

They still look fragile and elegant, but not quite as tranquil as some others'.

One great thing about this water lily species is that it can survive over long periods of time without water; it is incredibly resilient in hotter climates.

Another benefit of this flower is that it blooms repeatedly throughout the year; you won't have to worry about only having a small timeframe to enjoy their beauty in, like the pink water lily.

These lilies are even larger than the Rembrandt lilies, and can reach up to eight feet in diameter! They sit upon dark green lily pads that have jagged edges.

Midnight Water Lily

Despite what its name suggests, this water lily actually blooms throughout the day. It is similar in appearance to the *Nymphaea Capensis*.

It has long, spiky, purple petals that range in tone from deep purple to light violet, and each flower has a yellow center.

They grow above bright green lily pads that are rounded but with slightly jagged edges, and each flower can reach up to 5 feet wide.

These flowers need full sun to thrive, and when they do thrive, they give off a beautiful subtle fragrance.

Alba Water Lily

This beautiful water lily has pure white petals that grow in around three layers, all of which are fairly long with rounded points.

In the center of these white, delicate petals is a mass of bright yellow stamens, which complement the light petals perfectly. It sort of looks like a fried egg in flower form, but much more beautiful!

This flower grows atop dark green, round lily pads – the kind of lily pads you picture when you think of typical lily pads!

This delicate little flower can reach up to 12 inches in diameter, and thrives most in warm climates – it loves the sun. It really is a sunny-side-up kind of flower!

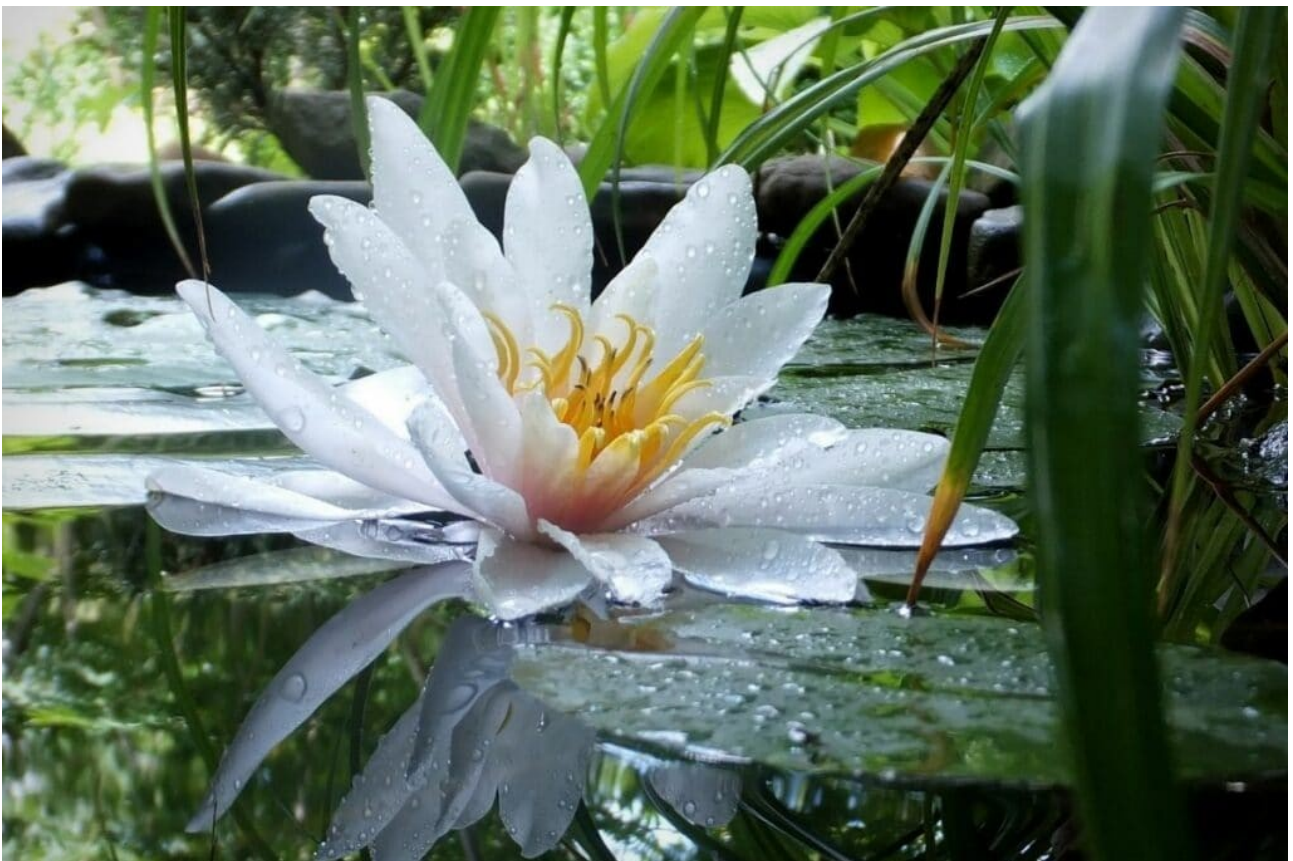
Mrs. George H. Pring Water Lily

If white lilies are what you are after, you will love these subspecies.

Like the previous water lily, this one loves the sunlight and fares best in hot climates. Its petals are rounded and long and have tones of white, cream, and even light yellow in places.

These light flowers are much larger than the Alba water lily, and can grow up to 6 feet wide! Their best feature, in our opinion, is the strong fragrance that they emit when in bloom.

Marliacea Carnea Water Lily



Next up is a lily that grows wide – up to five feet wide – and which matches its size with its beauty.

This is one of our favorite water lily subspecies – we just don't think there are many flowers that are able to match its beauty. The petals on this species are delicate, elegant, and softly rounded at the edges.

They grow in three layers and give the flower a cup-like shape. The color of this flower is what makes it so elegant; each petal is a soft, whitish shade of light pink, which deepens slightly as it reaches the base of the flower.

The subtlety in color is just beautiful and is timeless.

Contrasting with the light pink shades is the bright yellow placed at the center of the flower. Its bright stamens complement the subtle petals and emphasize their beauty.

With their beauty comes to some vulnerability; these flowers are not quite as resilient as some other water lily subspecies, and they do not fare well in hard climates.

Afterglow Water Lily

The name of this water lily stems from the fact that it really does look like it glows! This lily is one of the most beautiful subspecies of the Nymphaeaceae family.

Soft, rounded petals grow outwards and upwards to reveal shades of pink, purple, yellow, and orange.

The petals have their deepest pink color at their tips, and the color gradually transforms into yellow as it reaches the center – this is what gives the flowers their supposed glow.

These flowers are as bold as they are beautiful, and they can grow to a whopping eight feet in diameter, and they release a strong fragrance when they are in bloom.

We love these flowers, and just wish we had our own pond big enough to house them!

Colorado Water Lily

This next water lily is gaudy – in a lovely way. Its petals are flamingo pink in color and are accentuated by a bright orange center of stamens.

The petals are thick and pointed, and their lily pads are so colorful that they can sometimes appear red instead of green. Colorado water lilies can reach a width of five feet. Despite their bold and tropical colors, though, these flowers fare surprisingly badly in hot climates and prefer mild conditions.

Carolina Sunset Water Lily

If you like sunny-yellow flowers, the Carolina Sunset lily might just become your favorite!

It has light yellow, peach-colored petals that open during the day when they get their hit of sunlight.

When open, these petals reveal an even brighter center; its stamens are a vibrant shade of deep yellow.

These flowers are bold, but small, and have a maximum diameter of around eight inches.

As well as looking beautiful, these flowers also smell wonderful, thanks to the strong fragrance they produce when in bloom.

These sunshine flowers grow above light green lily pads.

Chromatella Water Lily

Another yellow-tastic water lily is the Chromatella water lily. It has pale yellow petals that grow to long rounded points, and which grow in a few different layers.

Like the Carolina Sunset water lily, these lilies get more and more yellow the closer you get to their center.

These lilies grow among lily pads that are wrinkled and dark green, which really accentuate their light yellow tones. This lily is one of the smallest subspecies, as it is a dwarf variety of water lilies. This means that it is very delicate.

As opposed to many lilies that thrive in full sunlight, this water lily does best when everything is in moderation; it likes partial shade and partial sun. We think they should call this plant the Goldilocks water lily!

Emily Grant Hutchings Water Lily

Why do so many people get to have a water lily named after them? We want a pretty flower to be named after us, too!

Anyway, Emily Grant Hutchings, whoever she is, is very lucky, because this flower is absolutely stunning.

The petals on this water lily are vibrant and bright, and are usually dark pink in color, but can also be a bit purple.

Interestingly, though, this water lily is a night bloomer, which means that its gorgeous petals only open up and display their beauty at night.

However, this flower species is pretty easy to propagate and is not too fussy about the sun or shade. We would love to see this flower in action, but we might need to buy some night vision goggles first...

Antares Water Lily

This is another night blooming water lily that only spreads its wings outside of daylight hours.

Its petals are often a very pretty pale pink, but they are also commonly seen with darker tones of fuchsia and purple-reds. These flowers sit on top of rounded, crinkled, bright green lily pads.

One of the coolest things about these water lilies is that they are not just pink and pretty, but they are also incredibly useful. Antares water lilies are actually able to purify the water they are in, much more so than most other types of lily.

Nymphaea Hermine

The Hermine water lily is comprised of light, white petals, which grow in layers around a bright yellow center.

The petals almost make a star shape as they grow, and the stamens in the middle look a little like anemones.

These delicate light flowers can actually grow up to three feet each in diameter, and they thrive the most when in full sunlight.

Helvola Water Lily



The Helvola water lily is absolutely gorgeous. It is subtle, sweet, and dainty. Petals on a Helvola water lily can either be white in color or can exist in a range of shades of yellow.

However, vibrant its petals are, every Helvola lily flower will have a bright yellow center of stamens.

The shape of this flower's petals is slightly different from most other kinds of water lilies; they have the same slender shape and rounded point, but they tend to sometimes fold inwards at the edges.

These water lilies bloom during the day, they love sunlight, and they can grow up to three feet wide. Interestingly enough, its leaves can sometimes be purple!

George L. Thomas Water Lily

The George L. Thomas water lily is one of the most vibrant water lilies you can get. Its petals are plentiful and are covered in a bright pink color that reminds us of deep pink roses.

In the center of this pink mass are orange stamens, whose color really makes the pink of the petals pop.

This bright flower loves bright light, and blooms during the day. As well as being one of the most colorful water lilies, the George L. Thomas water lily is also one of the largest; it can reach a diameter of up to twelve feet! These are more for lakes than little garden ponds!

Luciana Water Lily

This is the type of flower we picture when we think of water lilies. It has light pink, rounded petals which grow in tight rows, and which deepen in color as you get towards its center.

In the middle of these dainty petals is a cluster of bright yellow stamens.

These flowers grow among waxy, round, dark green lily pads.

Luciana water lilies bloom during the day, but they do not like being exposed fully to the sun, so do require some shade.

Pygmaea Helvola Water Lily

This is a dwarf subspecies of water lily, and can only grow up to two inches wide.

It may be small, but this cute little flower is still a treat to look at, especially when it blooms during the day.

Its petals range in color from white to light yellow, to deep yellow, to light orange. In the center of these petals is a hub of bright yellow stamens.

The bright colors of these water lilies make them very attractive to bees, as well as to the human eye! The lily pads that they grow between are usually quite a dark green; this deep color really highlights their yellow petals and makes them stand out even more.

Pygmaea Rubra Water Lily

Pygmaea Rubra water lilies are a lot like Pygmaea Helvola lilies, except they are pink instead of yellow or white.

It is also a dwarf variety of water lily, but what it lacks in size it makes up for with its vivid pink petals and bright orange stamens.

The petals are long and pointed, and their pink color is so vibrant that sometimes the petals turn red in color, after a period of time.

The mid-green lily pads that grow around the flowers contrast beautifully with the petal colors, both when they are pink and when they are red.

We think red lilies are absolutely stunning, and they are so rare that they are a joy to admire.

Nymphaea Capensis



These water lilies are lovely to look at. Their petals are a little thinner than most other water lilies', but the shape suits the flower.

The petals are usually white or very light pink, and they spread out to reveal bright yellow stamens.

As well as their two common colors, this flower can also occasionally be red or cream in color!

They love the sunlight, so Arc en Ciel water lilies bloom during daylight hours. They are medium-sized lilies and can reach a diameter of up to four feet wide.

Final Thoughts

Water Lilies have captured the hearts of people and cultures all over the world, and we are not surprised!

These ancient flowers have survived the toughest conditions that the world has to offer, and have done so with poise and beauty.

They can exist in climates all over the planet, and come in such a range of colors, sizes, and shapes.

They are as versatile as they are beautiful, and looking at them makes us want to elope to a chateau in France where we can grow our very own water lilies in our very own pond!

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

August

Poppy & Gladiolus

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Poppy

Varieties of Poppy

Poppies dance in the breeze with an almost ethereal charm. They symbolise dreams, imagination, and remembrance—a flower that carries both visual beauty and heartfelt meaning. From the fiery red poppies of remembrance to the soft, papery petals of Icelandic or oriental varieties, these blooms are as diverse as they are beautiful. We love it for garden design work because it has a **classic cottage garden appeal** – perfect for informal, wildlife-friendly spaces. Bees and butterflies can't resist their nectar-rich centers. There are several varieties of poppies to choose from, however, in my experience they are all just about finished flowering by August. We just had a few Welsh poppies left in the garden at the beginning of August, so I'm not sure why they qualify as August birth flowers, however, that doesn't mean I don't love them!

1. The Iconic Field Poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*)



The traditional remembrance poppy, with silky scarlet petals and a black heart. Scatter seed in autumn or spring for effortless swathes of colour. Loves poor, well-drained soil and full sun. This poppy is best for naturalistic planting, meadows and informal planting schemes.

2. Oriental Poppies (*Papaver orientale*)



Known for huge, crepe-paper blooms in shades from flaming orange to deep plum. Favourites include 'Patty's Plum' and 'Royal Wedding'. They die back after flowering but return stronger each year. These look great in cottage gardens, mixed borders and work

well as cut flowers. They can grow to just under a metre in height so best placed in the middle of a mixed border.

3. Iceland Poppies (*Papaver nudicaule*)



Smaller than the oriental poppy, fragrant, pastel blooms in lemon, coral, white, and soft pink, the Iceland poppies are short-lived perennials. I treat them as annuals. Great for cutting

—pick when buds just begin to open – containers, spring bedding and early colour in an informal scheme.

4. Himalayan Blue Poppy (*Meconopsis betonicifolia*)



A rare treat—large, sky-blue petals with a golden centre, this is one I can't grow because it prefers cool, moist, acidic soil and

dappled shade. I can't provide that but when I see it in other gardens it's breathtakingly beautiful. Well done if you succeed in growing this little beauty!

5. California Poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)



Cheerful, silky cups in orange, gold, or creamy white. Self-seeds generously, thrives on neglect, and flowers for months in sunny, well-drained sites. This is the one poppy I have found to be one of the reliable August birth flowers that actually will flower in the month of my birth! It's great in dry borders, gravel gardens and needs no maintenance. And costs just the price of a packet of seeds.

6. Welsh Poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*)



Bright yellow or orange blooms that dance in the breeze, this is my favourite go-to plant for a tricky spot. Unlike the Californian poppy, which likes sunnier climes, the Welsh poppy tolerates shade and moist soil and is much less... hmmm brash. It tends to pop up wherever it likes in my garden, which I'm quite happy with because I love naturalised planting.

Growing Tips for Poppies

1. **Sow from seed**—many poppies resent transplanting, so sow direct where they're to flower.
2. **Choose the right site**—full sun for annuals and Orientals, partial shade for Meconopsis types.
3. **Encourage self-seeding**—leave some seed heads to ripen for a naturalised look.
4. **Deadhead for repeat flowers**—especially in Iceland and California poppies.

Annual poppies self-seed freely, while perennial types offer reliable returns year after year.

Gladiolus

Gladiolus – The Sword Lily with Striking Presence

Standing tall and proud, the gladiolus earns its name from the Latin gladius, meaning “sword.” The towering stems, which can reach over a metre tall, are often lined with ruffled blooms in colours ranging from fiery crimson to soft lavender. Gladiolus symbolises strength, integrity, sincerity, and remembrance of victories so if this sounds significant to you, these would be your perfect choice of August birth flowers.

Varieties of Gladiolus

1. Grandiflora Gladiolus – The Classic Showstopper

These gladiolus are the larger, more showy varieties, if you want drama in your garden they are definitely going to give that. I saw some recently at **Miserden gardens in Gloucestershire**, planted with dahlias they made a big, bold border statements.



These are the gladiolus most people picture—tall, formal spikes with densely packed, showy blooms in every colour imaginable. They thrive in sunny, sheltered spots and are ideal for flower arranging. Popular varieties in the UK include:

- **‘Plum Tart’** – Rich magenta petals with subtle veining.



'Green Star' – Unusual pale green flowers for striking arrangements.



'Priscilla' – Creamy white with rose-pink edges, a cottage garden favourite.



2. The Nanus types of Gladioli



Nanus, also known as dwarf or “butterfly” gladioli are prized for their compact stature (around 60–70 cm tall) and loose, open blooms, which often resemble butterflies in flight. They offer vibrant colour without the need for staking (which the grandiflora varieties often require) making them perfect for borders, containers, and pollinator-friendly planting schemes. They’re relatively easy to grow if you follow a few seasonal care tips (see below.)

3. *Gladiolus murielae*



My favourite of the August birth flowers (by a long way!) This is not a specific variety but rather a species within the gladiolus genus. It used to be called *Acianthera murielae* but is probably easier to remember by its common names such as the Abyssinian gladiolus or Peacock Orchid. I have this growing in August outside the front on my house in containers. I find it works well with hostas because it's so elegant but the best bit of this distinctive plant is it's beautiful fragrance, that fills my front garden as the sun falls.

Care tips for Gladioli

In most UK regions, gladiolus corms are not fully hardy, but they can be overwintered by digging up the corms in October, after foliage has yellowed. Shake off the soil, trim the foliage, and dry in a frost-free, airy space for 2 weeks before storing in paper bags or mesh sacks in a cool, dark, frost-free place until spring. Sadly this did not work for my *Murielae* Gladiolus, so I treat them as a annual, call it 'birthday present.'

Designing with August's Birth Flowers

When planning a garden with August blooms in mind, think contrast and harmony:

- Pair tall gladiolus spires at the back of borders with drifts of poppies in front for layered colour and texture.
- Create a "birthday border" for an August-born loved one, using these flowers alongside other summer favourites like dahlias, sunflowers, and *verbena bonariensis*.
- Use poppy seed heads and dried gladiolus stalks for autumn and winter arrangements, extending their impact beyond the growing season.

Bring August into Your Garden

Whether you're celebrating your own birthday or gifting a friend, August's birth flowers offer more than just seasonal colour—they bring meaning, history, and personality to your outdoor space.

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.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

October

Marigold & Cosmos

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Marigolds

Marigolds are one of those cheerful, no-frills flowers that introduce a dash of colour into any garden.

With their daffodil yellows, burning oranges, and rich golds, they can light up borders, vegetable plots, containers, and even window boxes. While marigolds are generally considered to be warm-climate flowers, the silver lining is that they also do wonderfully well in Scotland—provided you observe a few simple tips to help them do well in our often unpredictable climate.

Why Grow Marigolds?

Firstly, marigolds are exceedingly easy to grow, so they're ideal for novice gardeners. But they're also one of the favourites of veteran gardeners for several outstanding reasons:

They bloom for months – from early summer until the first frost.

They're excellent companion plants – especially in the veg bed, where they help keep pests like aphid and whitefly away.

They attract pollinators – bees and butterflies love them.

They're low maintenance – marigolds aren't fussy, just a sunny spot to sit and the occasional bit of fuss.

There are two main types you'll see in garden centres: *Tagetes* (often called French or African marigolds, though both originate from the Americas) and *Calendula officinalis* (commonly called pot marigold). Both types grow well in Scotland, but they have slightly different preferences.

Starting from Seed

You can buy marigold plug plants in spring, but they're so easy (and cheap) to raise from seed that it's worth a try. Sow them indoors in late March and early April in pots or trays of seed compost. A south-facing window sill is fine, or better if you have a heated propagator or greenhouse.

Sow seeds thinly and just cover with compost.

Keep the compost moist but not soggy.

Germination will usually be 5–10 days.

When the seedlings are big enough to be transplanted, move them into individual pots and keep growing them on until all risk of frost has passed. In most of Scotland, that's late May or even early June.

If you have a covered garden or live in an area with more moderate weather (like the west coast), you can also plant marigold seeds directly into the ground in late April. You just have to be patient and let the soil warm up a bit.

Best Spot in the Garden

Marigolds are sun worshipers. In fact, the brighter, the better they flower. Choose a site that gets a minimum of 6 hours or sunlight a day. That may be a south-facing border, a sunny patio, or around the edge of your vegetable patch.

They'll grow in most soil types, but they prefer well-drained soil. If your soil is heavy clay (common in parts of Scotland), mix in some compost or grit to improve drainage.

If you're planting in containers, use multi-purpose compost and make sure your pots have good drainage holes. Marigolds don't like having "wet feet."

Caring for Your Marigolds

Once they're in the ground (or pots), marigolds are pretty low-maintenance.

Watering:

Water thoroughly, especially during hot weather. Water houseplants regularly but more frequently in summer and less frequently in winter.

When to deadhead:

Remove dead flowers to encourage additional flowering. You will be amazed for how long they keep flowering if you cut off the wilted ones.

When to feed:

No overwatering – too much nitrogen produces plenty of foliage but no flower. One monthly general-purpose feed is enough.

Growing Marigolds with Veg

One of the best things about marigolds is how they pair with vegetables. French marigolds (*Tagetes patula*) particularly are great at repelling pests like whitefly, nematodes, and some beetles.

Grow them with:

Tomatoes, Beans, Courgettes, Cabbages and Carrots

Their strong smell helps confuse pests and keep your veg healthy. And, naturally, they add a welcome splash of colour between it all.

Calendula: The Edible Marigold

If you prefer a two-way plant, give pot marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) a go. It's not only pretty—it's also edible! The petals can be included in salads, used to dye rice a saffron-like colour, or even dried and added to herbal teas.

Calendula is an annual which is hardy, so will be more tolerant of cooler weather than *Tagetes*. You might even catch it self-sowing and appearing again next spring.

Common Problems

Luckily, marigolds are disease and pest resistant. The main ones to watch out for are:

Slugs and snails, especially when the plants are young. Give copper tape, beer traps, or eggshells ground up at the base a try.

Powdery mildew – this can happen in hot, humid weather.

Proper spacing and air circulation stop it.

A Scottish Garden Staple

While marigolds might seem like a flower that would thrive in more sun-kissed latitudes, they're surprisingly hardy for Scottish weather—if you give them a good start and some sunlight.

From illuminating a border, supplying colour through veg beds, to potting up sunny pots for the patio, marigolds are an excellent option for beginners and veteran gardeners alike.

Therefore, if you wish to bring a long-term, low-maintenance splash of colour to your garden this summer, buy a packet of

these lovely [annual plants](#) and get growing. You will not regret it!

Cosmos

How to grow cosmos from seed



Cosmos are half-hardy annuals that produce feathery leaves and beautiful, daisy-like flowers throughout the summer and into autumn. Delivering vibrant colour and texture until the first frosts, they're a magnet for pollinators like bees and butterflies. Here's a step-by-step guide to growing cosmos from seed.

When to sow cosmos seeds



Cosmos 'Tango' is perfect for attracting pollinators

Cosmos seeds are easy to grow. They can be started off in seed trays indoors, or scattered directly outdoors on the soil where you want them to bloom.

If you're germinating your cosmos seeds indoors, start them in late-March or April. This will give them plenty of time to establish strong roots before it's time to plant them out. They will start flowering from late June.

If you prefer to direct sow your flower seeds outdoors, wait until the last frost has passed and the soil has warmed up. This is

usually sometime in May, depending on where you live. Direct sown seeds will start flowering slightly later than those started inside. But remember, cosmos seeds need full sun to germinate and flower, so be sure to choose a warm, bright and sunny spot.

How to sow cosmos seeds indoors



‘Candyfloss Mix’ is a beautiful blend of pink, white, and deep-red blooms

Here are some tips on sowing cosmos seeds:

1. **Fill trays:** Use peat-free seed compost and fill your trays or pots to about 1cm below the rim. Gently tamp the soil down.

2. **Sow seeds:** Hold the seeds in your palm, and sow each one about 0.5cm deep. Alternatively, take a small pinch and scatter them evenly over the tray of soil. Gently cover with compost.
3. **Water lightly:** Use a watering can with a fine rose.
4. **Provide warmth:** Place the trays in a warm, bright spot (18-21°C). A bright windowsill or propagator works well. Cover with a clear lid to retain moisture and speed up germination, usually about 7-14 days.
5. **Prick out seedlings:** Move the seedlings to their own pots, once they're big enough to handle, to avoid overcrowding.
6. **Harden off:** Prepare your seedlings to be transplanted into their final positions by placing them outside for a few hours each day. Get them used to it gradually, over a period of 7-10 days.
7. **Plant out:** After the last frost (usually late May or early June), transplant your seedlings into the garden. Space them 45-60cm apart to allow for growth.

How to direct sow cosmos seeds outdoors



‘White Knight’ can produce single and double flowers on the same plant

Cosmos seeds are suitable for direct sowing outdoors, and provide an easy way to fill a large border. In fact, they look wonderful when planted en masse.

To direct sow, dig the soil over lightly, removing any weeds or debris, then rake it into a fine tilth. Make sure the area is well-draining, as cosmos dislikes heavy, wet soil. You can either broadcast-sow the seeds, or create rows about 15-20cm apart. Cover the seeds lightly with soil and water gently.

Quick tips on caring for cosmos



The petals of this pretty cosmos are completely fused

Cosmos loves full sun, and won't flower in shade.

- It tolerates poor soil but prefers well-draining conditions.
- Avoid over-fertilising your cosmos, as this can lead to fewer flowers.
- Water regularly during dry spells, but avoid overwatering. Cosmos is drought-tolerant once established.
- Remove faded flowers to encourage more blooms.
- Cosmos is generally disease-resistant, but make sure there is good air circulation to prevent fungal issues.

- You may need to support taller varieties with stakes to prevent them from flopping in windy conditions.

Five cosmos varieties to try at home



This award-winning variety has vibrant, show-stopping petals

If you're looking for inspiration, here are some of our horticultural team's favourite cosmos varieties to try in your own garden:

1. **Cosmos 'Tango'** – fiery orange blossoms that are a beacon for butterflies.
2. **Cosmos 'Fondant Fancy'** – dainty, dark-pink saucer-shaped flowers that look fantastic in drifts.

3. **Cosmos 'Apricot Lemonade'** – beautiful petals that open in soft apricot and fade to cream with a mauve ring around the centre.
4. **Cosmos 'Cupcakes Blush'** – a cup of pale pink fused petals that hold a flounce of smaller ruffled petals in the centre.
5. **Cosmos 'Apricotta'** – a tall, back of the border variety in a striking blend of apricot and raspberry.

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

November

Chrysanthemum & Peony

Composited off the Internet

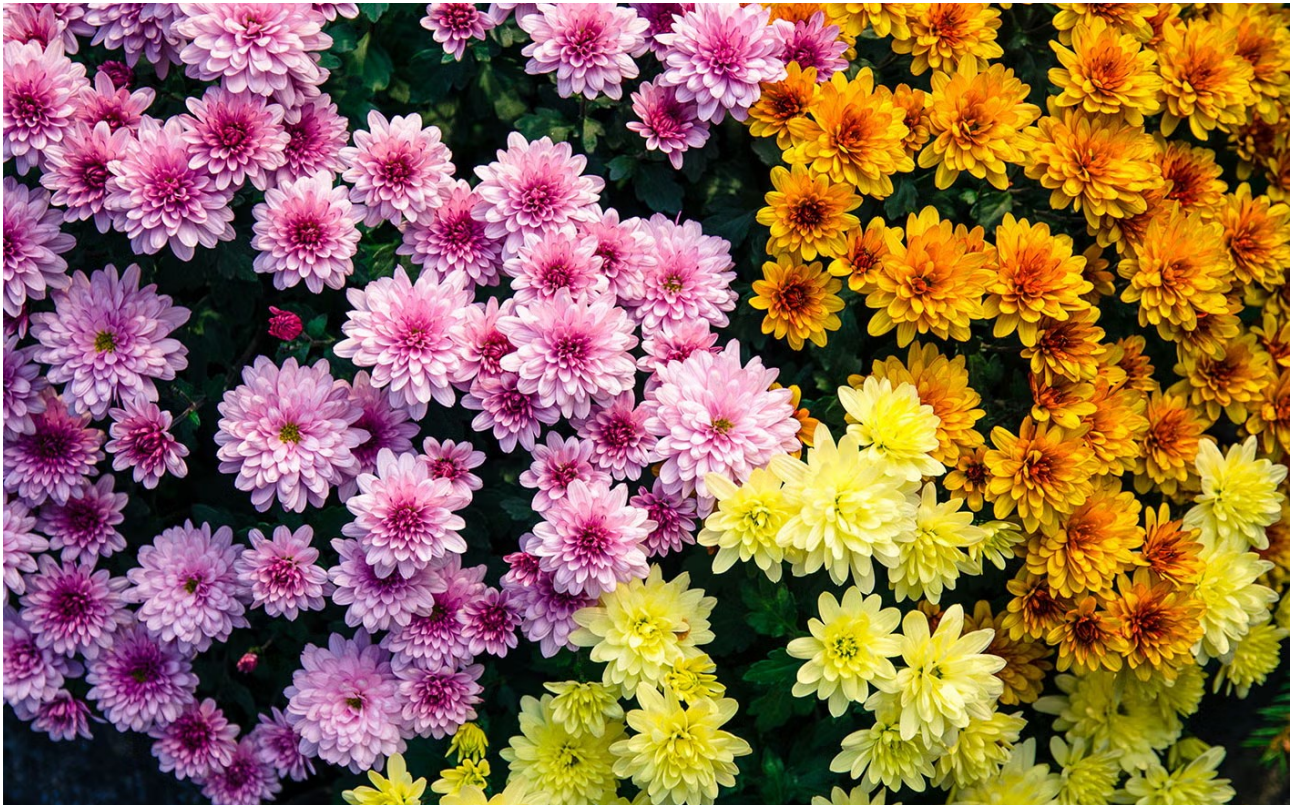
by

Gareth Richards

Chrysanthemum

How to plant, grow, and care for chrysanthemums – for beautiful autumn flowers

Everything you need to know about cultivating these glorious blooms



Even if you **don't have a huge garden**, there's one autumn plant you absolutely need: chrysanthemums.

These easy-to-grow flowers are the calling cards of autumn and can be planted after the **last frost** – so from mid May onwards. Chrysanthemums, also sometimes affectionately called 'mums',

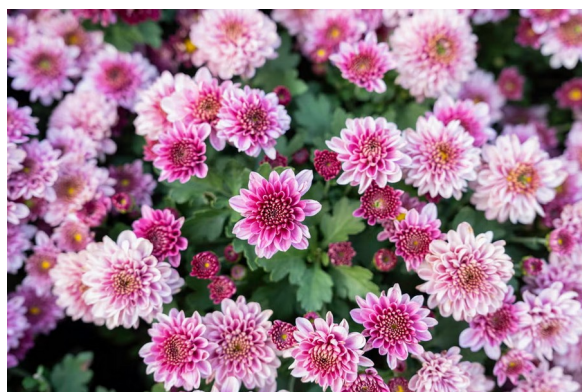
are **pest** and disease-resistant, so they're about as **low-**
maintenance as it gets. They work well in pots and in garden
beds, too, and come in many different forms with big, lush
flowers or **daisy-like blooms**.

They're technically perennials so (if you can) get them in the
ground early in the season, so that they can establish their root
systems before the colder months hit. But if not, no worries.
They're inexpensive enough to treat as annuals, so you can
replant new chrysanthemums next year.

Because they come in every colour of the rainbow, they're a
must-have for your autumn garden.

Nothing says 'welcome' to autumn like these bright, cheery fall
flowers – so it's time to start planting now....

Growing tips



H

Here's what you need to know to grow them:

- Exposure:** Full sun
- When to plant:** Spring to late summer
- Pests and diseases to watch out for:** Aphids, leaf miners, leaf spot

How to plant chrysanthemums

Dig a hole twice as wide as the pot, and place the plant in the hole so that the crown (where the roots meet the stems) are at ground level – and not any deeper. Backfill the soil, water, and mulch to retain moisture and keep down weeds.

How to care for chrysanthemums

Chrysanthemums are not big feeders, so add a compost when you plant them, then give them a general-purpose slow-release fertiliser in early summer. Water regularly, especially when you're first planting, or they'll wilt on hot days.

To encourage a bushier plant with more flowers, pinch off the tips of each "branch" anytime from late spring to early July. Do this a few times a season, but not any later than mid-July or you'll cut off the flower buds. If you're not into all that effort, it's

fine to let them grow into a more free-form shape. Either way, don't expect pinching to produce that perfectly rounded plant you first brought home from the nursery; those are treated with growth regulators to produce a mounded shape.

If you're keeping them in pots or containers for the season, make sure to water during hot, dry spells. **Pots dry out much faster** than garden beds, so check them regularly so they don't wilt.

Common questions

Are chrysanthemums perennial?

Yes, chrysanthemums are **perennials**, which means they do come back every year. If you plant them in spring or early summer, the plants have time to settle in and will return in subsequent seasons. But here's the trick: most people plant them in autumn, which is too late in the year to get them established in time to survive the winter. However, nature is surprising, so sometimes, even if you plant late, they'll return next spring.

How do you divide fall chrysanthemums?

If your plants are getting floppy or too crowded with your other perennials, use a hand trowel or spade to separate a piece of the plant with the roots, to replant elsewhere. Do this in early spring when you first see new growth.

Should you cut off the dead flowers to help them bloom longer?

No, this isn't necessary and won't create new flowers. Spend your time doing something else fun in the garden.

Can you grow autumn chrysanthemums indoors?



Chrysanthemums need cold to initiate their flower buds, so you can't bring them indoors like a houseplant. However, you can buy florist chrysanthemums, which are grown in greenhouses and given as gift plants, much of the year.

Do fall chrysanthemums need full sun?

Yes. They need full sun, which is six or more hours per day. They can adapt to a little bit of shade, but they won't bloom well. If they start to get too shaded by maturing trees, dig them up and move them in the spring.

Peony

How To Plant a Peony Step-by-Step (& The Big Mistake To Avoid)



1.

When is the best time to plant my peonies?

As with most perennials, we can plant peonies either in the fall or in spring.

There is a difference in what we have available in either season though.

If we're planting peonies in the fall, what we'll usually find in store or with online suppliers are bare roots. This means that we're planting dormant peony root stocks that will overwinter in the ground and emerge the following spring.



When we're planting peonies in spring, they're usually only available as a potted plant. In early spring and late winter, you might be able to find bare rhizomes for sale; but later than that the roots will be taken off the shelf because they would already start to break dormancy.

Which choice is better?

I don't think it's a question of better, but ***it is*** a question of timing. In the first couple of years, we have to focus on strong root development, not on flowering.

What is the best time to get the roots in the ground?



In spring, potted peonies are more common in garden stores. If you're planting in the fall, the best time is several weeks before a hard freeze. This will allow the roots to recover and adjust to their new environment.

In spring, the best time is once the ground is sufficiently warm. This will depend on your gardening zone, of course. In my area, that usually happens anytime between mid-March and mid-April.

Let me take you along while I plant my peonies this spring.

I have a few tips that might prove helpful to get these gorgeous perennials off to a good start.

But before we move on to getting the peonies in the ground, here's what you should take into account first.

Peonies NEED full sun in order to thrive!

I'm afraid there's no workaround for this requirement. If we want our peonies to bloom and not just limp along, they **NEED** to be in full sun. This translates to about six hours of sun a day.



If you are in a gardening zone that gets scorching sun in the afternoon (such as zones 8 and 9), then some afternoon shade may be good for peonies. But only in this scenario.

Peonies NEED well-draining soil in order to thrive!

Of course, the downside of the full sun requirement is that we also have to make sure that the soil doesn't dry up too quickly, which is so often the case with portions of the garden that get this much direct sunlight.

And the kicker is that we have to strike the balance between not too dry, but well-draining enough. If there are pools and puddles lingering around after it rains, or after we water the plants, that's not good either. It may lead to root rot and fungal problems for the peonies.



Peonies need **consistent** moisture, but not **constant** moisture. So we have to water them regularly, but avoid overwatering them.

That's why I like to take care of the health of my soil year round. So in spring, I add a layer of compost to boost the nutrients in the soil and also improve its water-holding properties. I also add extra compost to the planting site every single time I get a new perennial in the ground.

Now that you know when and where to plant your peonies, let's go out in the garden and put some in the ground.

I'm planting my peonies in spring. But if you're doing this in the fall, I've also added some information on that at the end of the article.

Step 1: Prepare your peony planting site.

I take this step very seriously because peonies are expensive plants. They won't bankrupt me, but compared to other perennials at the garden center, they seem to command quite a high price for such young plants.

So even though it may seem like an extra step – and an extra expense – I always try to do whatever I can to give them a boost right at planting time.



I've started adding a scoop of mycorrhizae right before I get my perennials in the ground. I like to refer to it as “gardener's magic dust” because it works out of sight to boost the strength of the roots and thus the size and longevity of the plant.

I bought my mycorrhizae at a local garden center, but [this brand seems to be the most reputable and popular](#) based on reviews.

You can [read more about how this stuff helps your plants at planting time here.](#)

The mycorrhizal fungi create a symbiotic relationship with the plant, a relationship that improves nutrient uptake, soil structure and the plant's resilience against pests as well as environmental stressors.

This is really potent stuff, so I only use a small scoop of it for every plant, according to the instructions on the bag.



One small scoop per plant is enough to start creating fungal connections that nourish the soil.

By my calculations, it costs less than a dollar to add a sprinkling of mycorrhizae every time I plant a new perennial. The average price

for a peony is around 35 dollars, with some cultivars going for as much as 79 dollars. I think the one dollar investment is definitely worth it!

I make sure to mix it around in the soil evenly. This is also when I add some extra compost or leaf mold to improve drainage.

One mistake when planting peonies...

Speaking of protecting our “investment,” let’s avoid this one mistake that could set back our peonies. Namely, planting them too deeply.



We should never plant them deeper than they are in the nursery pot.

We need to plant them at the same depth as they have been planted in their nursery pot. That means roots underground, crown right at ground level, the entirety of the stem above ground.

(You'll see that the same is true when planting bare root peonies, if you read till the end.)



But look how tall the nursery pot is!

When I picked up this potted peony at the store, I thought there's no way it's planted that deeply. The nursery pot seemed way too tall for a peony. I don't know whether they use such large pots for ease of shipping or if it was just a marketing decision to accommodate the oversized label sleeve.

Step 2: Get your peony in the ground.

It turned out that my suspicion was correct. The bottom third of the nursery pot was just extra potting soil. I think they used such a large container because the rhizomes were quite large and jammed in.



Honestly, the hardest part of this planting project was getting the peony rhizomes out of the pot. I didn't want to pull hard on the stems because they are quite tender and breakable. And since it's fresh growth, they're also full of water and would have snapped like celery stalks.



This was the most nerve-wracking part.

So I had to dig around the edges of the pot and pull out the peonies by the crown.

I got a bit nervous, but look how gorgeous these rhizomes were. So healthy and sturdy. I definitely made the right choice with this cultivar called 'Longlife Red.'

Adjusting the rhizomes and getting them in the ground was a bit tricky because the stems had been growing a bit lopsided in the nursery pot.



There were five attached rhizomes in the pot.

But that's perfectly normal and it will correct itself over the first growing season as the plant fills up and leans towards the sun.

The essential rule: Don't bury the peony crown.

I could have been tempted to bury the rhizomes deeper and use soil to prop them up a bit and make them look upright. But that would have been a mistake.



In the ground they go.

It's essential that we always transplant peonies at the same depth as they were planted in the nursery pot.

The crown needs to be at ground level once you're done with planting. No roots exposed. No stems buried.

I then backfilled the planting hole with the remaining potting soil from the nursery pot, and extra compost from my own compost bins.



Backfill, water, then top up the soil some more.

Step 3: Water, stake and mulch the peony plant.

I finished by watering everything really well (avoiding watering the leaves and just focusing on deep-watering the roots). Then I topped up the soil again, just because the water had settled it a bit too low and I was afraid it would go even lower after a heavy rain.



Peonies need lots of water to get established.

Staking is an extra step that I wouldn't usually bother with when I'm planting perennials. But when planting peonies, staking right from the get-go is important. Especially for a baby peony as tall as the one I've just planted.

First of all, because it's tender and I wouldn't want it to sway in a windstorm and snap. And secondly, because peonies produce really large blooms. The flowers often get too heavy for the stalks, so they will need staking later in the season anyway.



Adding a circular stake now to keep them upright. I will raise it as the peonies grow taller.

I'm using a circular support for corralling the peonies. This will keep them upright, yet keep them loose enough to allow for air flow. It may look a bit silly now, but it will fill up over the rest of the growing season. This cultivar is fairly compact, so even though I might need to go up a size in circular stakes, this setup should be enough for the next couple of months.

As usual, I'm finishing up the transplanting process by applying a bit of mulch around the perimeter of the plant. You can use wood chips, dry leaves, leaf mold or fresh compost.



Happy campers soaking the sun about a week later.

Is the process the same when I plant bare root peonies?

That's right. Most of the steps are exactly the same whether you're planting potted peonies or bare root ones. You have to prepare the soil just as well and always pay attention to how much sun the plant will get.



Follow the same steps when you're planting bare root peonies.
Make sure the "eyes" are facing up.

When you're planting bare roots, you'll want to make sure that you're getting them in the ground the right side up, with the "eyes" facing up. Then cover up everything and give it a good soak.

The only slight difference is that there's a bit more urgency to get bare roots in the ground. You'll have to plant them as soon as you get them,

because the rhizomes are prone to drying faster if we leave them out of the ground for too long.



Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

December

Ponsettia & Holly

Composited off the Internet

by

Gareth Richards

Poinsettia



Poinsettias are one of our most popular Christmas houseplants – and frequently given as Christmas gifts. There’s no doubt that they provide a bright, cheery festive feel to any home and a colourful centrepiece.

They are the most colourful of any Euphorbia we grow and, as its species name *pulcherrima* suggests: ‘the most beautiful’.

Poinsettias are grown for their large leafy bracts, which surround the real flowers, the small insignificant yellow 'blobs' at the centre.

Although red is still the most common and traditional colour, white, pink and bicoloured/marbled varieties are also available.

The milky sap that comes from cut poinsettia stems may cause skin irritation, in the form of a rash, if you have sensitive skin and come into contact with the sap.

HOW TO GROW POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias need a position in bright, but filtered light, away from strong sunlight. They need a minimum temperature of 13-15°C (55-60°F), but away from sources of direct heat – such as an open fire or radiator – and away from draughts.

POINSETTIA VARIETIES

There are numerous named varieties of poinsettias, although most suppliers rarely provide the name – you simply buy them on the colour of their bracts. But here are some of the best ones.

- **Chianti:** Rich, wine-coloured bracts.
- **Cortez Series:** Cortez Burgundy, deep plum; Cortez Electric Fire, red; Cortez White; Cortez Candy, pink.
- **Lemon Snow:** Pale yellow bracts.

- **Marblestar:** Pink bracts with white margins.Red Velvet Dusky pink bracts.
- **Silver Star:** Dusky pink bracts and variegated leaves.Sonora White Glitter Red bracts with white splashes.

Planting poinsettias

Poinsettias aren't too fussy about their compost, but use a good multi-purpose such as **John Innes No 3 Compost** (3 parts to 1 part grit) or **a multi-purpose with added John Innes**.

Only replot plants to the next size pot in spring.

Suggested planting locations and garden types

Houseplant, indoor plant, summer patio plant.

How to care for poinsettias

Care for poinsettias starts when you buy them. Because they are sensitive to cold and winds, which can damage the foliage and cause it to drop prematurely, never buy one from an outdoor market or garage forecourt.

Always ask the shop to wrap the plant in a houseplant wrapper, including over the top of the foliage, to protect it.

Wherever possible, try to buy British. British-grown poinsettias are grown 'hard', which makes them tougher than those grown in many European countries, which are more susceptible to adverse conditions. Ask in the shop if theirs are British poinsettias.

Water poinsettias sparingly, aiming to keep the compost moist – allow the top of the compost to slightly dry out before watering again – as overwatering will damage them. Always use tepid water – never cold water direct from the tap.

Feed fortnightly with **a high potash plant food** – or use one of the feed drippers available from garden centres.

Mist plants regularly to increase humidity around the plants or, better still, stand pots on trays of moist hydroleca or Hortag to help increase humidity.

Getting plants to colour up again

Many people dispose of their poinsettia plants after the festive season and when the bracts start to drop or lose their colour. But it is possible to get the bracts to colour up again for the following year – although it can be a bit of a tricky process. Cut back the stems to 10-15cm (4-6in) in April.

Repot the plants into a slightly bigger pot and grow them on in a light, cool place at a temperature of 15-18°C (60-65°F). They can even be put outdoors in summer, on a sheltered patio, once temperatures reach at least 15°C (60°F).

Bract colouring is brought on by short winter day length. From October/November onwards, plants need 12 hours of complete darkness every day, for a period of 8 to 10 weeks. So place the plants in a dark cupboard or cover them with a cardboard box or light-proof bag. Even one night of missing this dark treatment or accidentally exposing them to light, can

stop/hinder the colouring process. Plants need a constant temperature of about 18°C (55°F) to colour up well.

Flowering season(s)	Winter
Foliage season(s)	Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter
Sunlight	Partial shade
Soil type	Loamy
Soil pH	Neutral
Soil moisture	Moist but well-drained
Ultimate height	Up to 60cm (2ft)
Ultimate spread	Up to 45cm (18in)
Time to ultimate height	1-2 years

Holly

How to Plant & Grow **Holly**

Holly plants are essential additions to your garden, especially for festive displays. These can appear anywhere from small shrubs to large climbers.

If you're new to growing Hollies, then you're in the right place. We hope this guide helps you learn how to grow and maintain your Holly shrubs like a pro.



When to Plant Holly

Container-grown Hollies can be planted at any time of year, but preferably in autumn, winter and spring. Avoid planting when the ground is frozen or waterlogged.



Where to Plant Holly

Holly shrubs can be grown in well-drained soil in sun or shaded areas of the garden. They thrive in moist soil but not waterlogged.

How to Plant Holly

Planting Holly from pots into borders Pot-grown plants are incredibly easy to plant and grow. Whether you're growing them directly outside into the border or into a container, our pot-grown plants are a breeze from the moment they arrive.

- **Prepare the soil before planting with plenty of organic matter, like compost, before planting. This helps the soil retain moisture, helping your Holly thrive.**

- **Water the plant well before planting it in place so that the stress on the plant is minimalised.**

- **Dig a hole in the border that's twice the width of the root system, and as deep as it was in its pot.**

- **Wedge in the plant by adding soil to the gaps in the hole, firming down the surface to ensure it's in place.**
- **Water in well, and you're done!**

Planting Holly into Containers

- **Choose a container that is slightly larger than the original container.**

- **Fill the pot with your compost of choice.**

- After two or three years, the roots fill the pot, which means it's time to repot it into a slightly larger container in spring.

When to Water Holly

For the first few years, water Holly shrubs in dry spells throughout spring and summer. Once they have established, they are drought tolerant and won't need watering as often, except for particularly dry spells in summer to help produce healthy growth.



Cross-pollinating Holly

If you're after those bright, colourful winter berries, then a bit of work needs to go into planting and planning for this.

These berries are produced on female plants. However, they can only do this if you have both the male and female plants close by each other, as the male plant pollinates the other.

Pruning Holly

Hollies can be cut back or lightly trimmed, whatever you prefer. They can be trimmed into hedges of formal shapes or left to do whatever they fancy. To prune holly shrubs, do this in late summer before the new growth becomes wood-like.

Propagating Holly



If you're looking to propagate your holly shrub, you can do this from seed. Collect their seeds from the berries they produce in winter, removing the flesh and rinsing the seeds. Plant them in compost and leave them outside to germinate. You can also take semi-ripe cuttings in late summer when you do your pruning or hardwood cuttings in winter.

Common Diseases and Pests

Hollies can be usually pest and trouble-free. However, they can be affected by one issue: leaf blight.

This is a fungal infection that affects the leaves, causing discolouration and lack of growth. It thrives in damp and cold conditions. Unfortunately, there is no treatment, but if you notice any symptoms of this infection then cut off the area and burn the trimming to prevent spread.

When do Hollies flower?

Holly shrubs can produce tiny red berries in winter, lasting throughout the season. The female plants produce these red berries but need a male plant to cross-pollinate them. See our above section on cross-pollination for more information.



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June 2026