

Yeovil Allotments Association

Birth Flowers for

October

Marigold & Cosmos

Composited off the Internet

by

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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 of 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.