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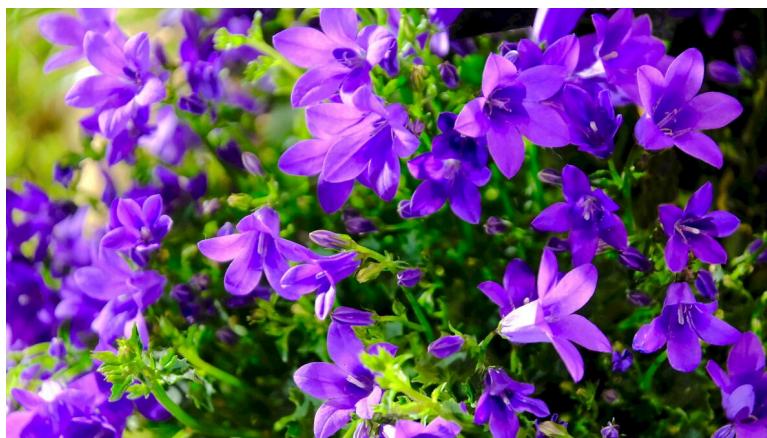
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How to Grow Bellflowers: The Complete Guide to Campanula



Dalmatian bellflower (*campanula portenschlagiana*) in the garden.

Photo Credit: Iwciagr

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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Bellflower Plants

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

Last Updated: October 15, 2024



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Blue flowers can be hard to find and easy-to-grow blue flowers even more so. If bell-shaped blooms, pollinators, and blue hues are your thing, discover bellflowers (*Campanula*). Learn how to plant, grow, and care for this “belle” of the garden.

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About Bellflowers

“little bell.” The bells vary from open saucer to pixie cap to tubular. They’re loved by bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds and function as excellent pollinator attractors when planted en masse.

Bellflower blooms are five petals fused at the base and can be on tall spikes or arrayed individually on the plant, depending on the species. Most flower from mid-summer to autumn. They are cold-hardy and can survive in USDA Zones 3 to 8.

The genus has hundreds of species! They can be perennials, biennials, or annuals! Whether short groundcovers or tall prairie plants, most are covered in light blue, lavender, or purple bell-shaped flowers, although white varieties are also available.

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Pale white and pink *Campanula punctata* flowers. Credit: Saiglobalnt

Bluebells are a perfect addition to cottage-style gardens. They are happy to grow in the sun or partial shade. They're a good plant to grow under trees.

Due to their wide range of varieties, they are versatile, adding fairy-like beauty to woodland edges, paths, bed borders, fencing (taller varieties), rock gardens, and as the spiller in hanging baskets.

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PLANTING

When to Plant Bellflowers

Bellflowers can be planted outdoors once the spring frosts have passed. Perennial varieties can also be planted 4-6 weeks before the fall frosts to allow time for new roots to establish before the plant goes dormant. Harden off potted plants for a week prior to transplanting.

Where to Plant Bellflowers

Bellflowers enjoy full to partial sunlight and will thrive in the dappled light at the edge of the woods. In the warmer areas of their range, plant them in locations with afternoon shade to give them a break at the hottest time of the day. They aren't picky about soil conditions, except that

Use bellflowers to provide the garden with those hard-to-find blue hues, setting off the more common yellows and oranges.

How to Plant Bellflowers

Bellflowers are easy to find at nurseries and garden centers in spring and can be ordered in small pots online. Plant potted bellflowers just as you would other small annuals or perennials, taking care to choose the appropriate location. Spacing will vary depending on the mature size of the cultivar you selected.

For established plants:

- Prepare the area by removing roots, rocks, and weeds. Loosen the soil and work in a few handfuls of compost.
- Dig a hole as deep as the root ball and twice as wide.
- Remove the bellflower from its container and prune any circling or

- Place the bellflower in the hole to check the depth—it should rest evenly with the ground surface.
- Backfill the hole, ensuring no air pockets form around the roots.
- Water thoroughly, then apply mulch around the plant to hold soil moisture and keep weeds down.

To start Bellflowers from seed indoors:

- Begin 6 to 8 weeks before your last frost in spring.
- Sow bellflower seeds in trays or cell packs in a standard seed starting mix.
- Lightly cover seeds with a dusting of vermiculite, but don't bury them—they need light to germinate.
- Cover the tray with a humidity dome or plastic wrap to preserve moisture until germination, then remove the cover.
- Harden off seedlings prior to transplanting outdoors.

GROWING

are established. They prefer evenly moist but not soggy soil. With proper mulching, they should be fine receiving the same watering as the rest of the garden, whether that's rain or from your irrigation.

Some types of campanulas need support. If so, stake when growth is two-thirds complete.

Trim off dead stems and vegetation in early spring before the plants break dormancy.

As blossoms fade, deadhead the more visible tall varieties or container plantings; this will promote more flowers and prevent self-seeding. Most varieties can be cut back to the base. With *Campanula lactiflora*, just pinch off the top blossoms for more blooms. If you give them the "Chelsea chop" in late spring (cutting down by one-third), they will flower again.

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Bellflowers do need some TLC. If left unattended, they will fade away. To avoid this, take cuttings every three years (in spring-time) and propagate if you wish.



Blue bellflowers gorgeously contrast with a yellow rose. Credit: S. Kalyakin

Types

partial shade and reaches 3-5 feet tall in the second year. Although a biennial, it often self-seeds, maintaining a presence in the garden or meadow.



Tall bellflower blooms with purple flowers in Indiana. Credit: CampSmoke

- ‘Takion Blue’ (*C. persicifolia*) is a peach-leaved bellflower that forms a mounded shape about 12-16 inches tall and wide. It’s hardy in Zones 4-8 and covered in upright lavender-blue flowers. It’s often called Fairy Bellflower or Fairy Bells. Can you see why?



Campanula persicifolia. Credit: A.

- Dalmatian bellflower (*C. portenschlagiana*) is a fantastic trailing species. It is semi-evergreen, hardy in USDA Zones 3-8, and perfect for trailing over the edge of hanging baskets or rock walls.



Campanula portenschlagiana, the wall bellflower. Credit: Crystaldream

- ‘Rapido Blue’ (*C. carpatica*) is a ground-cover type of bellflower best planted in groups. It stays only 5-8 inches tall and not much wider and is super cold-hardy.



Campanula carpatica. Credit: Lidia Kovacs

- The best border bellflowers are named forms of *Campanula lactiflora*.



Campanula lactiflora 'Alba' (Milky Bellflower) in a cottage garden in England. Credit: Peter Turner Photography

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WIT AND WISDOM

- Bellflowers vary widely in mature size; double-check the tag to make sure you're getting the right one for the spot you're considering.
- Trailing bellflowers make an excellent alternative to petunias for a hanging basket in a partially shady location.
- Avoid the non-native *C. rapunculoides*, also known as creeping bellflower. In many areas of the US, it is an aggressive invasive species that can be quite problematic.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small produc-

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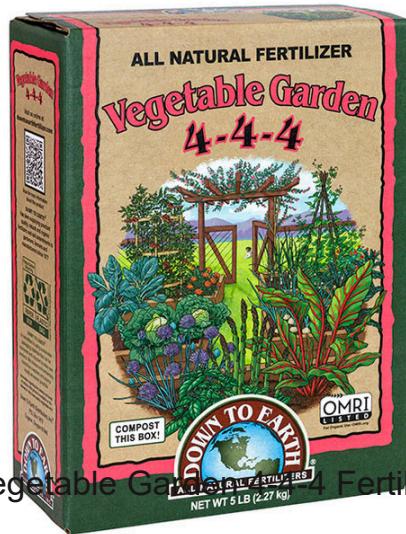
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