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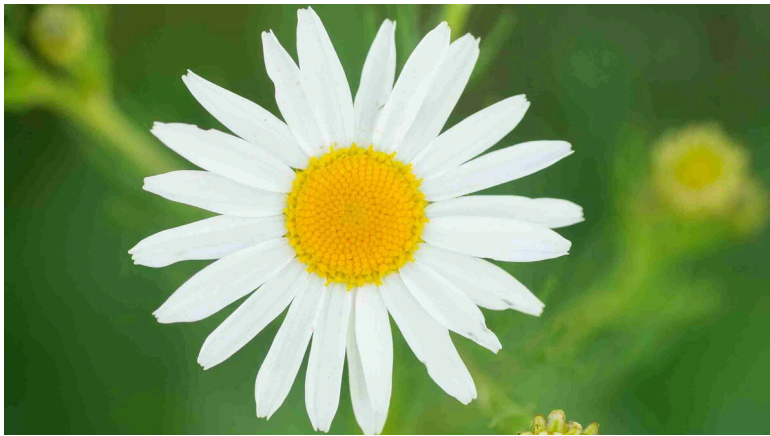
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How to Grow Chamomile: The Complete Herb Guide



Chamomile flower (*Matricaria recutita*) in the garden.

Photo Credit: BushAlex

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Seeding, Growing, and Harvesting Chamomile

By [Lauren Landers](#)

Last Updated: April 18, 2025



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Cute as a button, but far more versatile, chamomile is famously used in sleepy-time brews, but growing it is anything but a *snore*. This multipurpose plant is edible, but it also attracts pollinators and looks great in bouquets. And there are two beginner-friendly varieties to try in your garden!

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About Chamomile Plants

The *Matricaria* genus includes about 25 species of chamomile, but only two types of chamomile are commonly grown in gardens:

- **German chamomile** (*Matricaria recutita*) is an annual plant that maxes out at around 2 feet high and is often grown in flower beds or used in companion planting. This edible plant also produces fragrant, yellow and white blooms that are magnets for pollinators, and its slightly sweet, herbal flavor is highly prized in teas!
- **Roman or English chamomile** (*Chamaemelum nobile*) is a perennial plant that grows low to the ground and is often used as a fragrant ground-cover, border plant, or grass alternative in low-traffic lawns. Winter hardy in zones 4 and up, Roman is edible and pollinator-friendly, but its daisy-like flowers are less commonly used in teas due to their slightly bitter flavor.

Chamomile plants of all sorts belong to

native to Europe and Western Asia, where they grow wild in sunny meadows and disturbed areas. However, these plants also thrive in gardens and pots, and they tolerate full sun or part shade, poor soil and drought, and they're even pest and deer resistant.



Wild Chamomile (Matricaria Chamomilla) in a summer meadow.
Credit: Piotr Velixar

Although chamomile flowers are usually brewed into teas, they can also be infused into food, baths, and skin care products, and bitter-tasting leaves are sometimes used in beer-making too. Of course, if you don't want to eat or drink chamomile, you can also grow these plants for natural dye, cut flowers, or pressing, or simply use them to brighten up your flower beds!

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PLANTING

Roman chamomile is usually grown from nursery-started plants, while German chamomile is typically grown from seed. Seeds can be directly sown in garden beds in autumn, but it's usually best to start them indoors in spring, about 6 to 8 weeks before your last frost date!

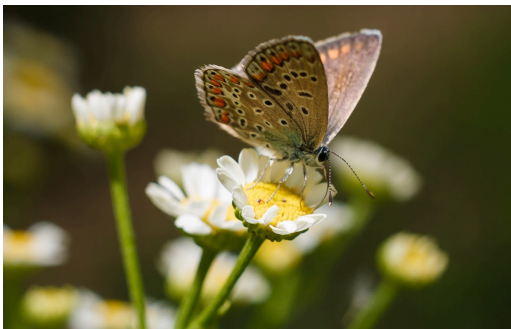
- Fill up seed-starting trays or pots with

- Lightly press about two seeds on top of the soil in each seed starting cell or pot, but don't cover the seeds up. They need light to germinate!
- Move the seeds under grow lights and mist the soil regularly to keep it evenly moist. Seeds should sprout in about 1 to 2 weeks.
- Once the danger of frost has passed and the seedlings are 1 to 2 inches tall, harden your plants off for 1 to 2 weeks, and then transplant them outdoors into pots or well-draining garden beds.
- When transplanting, bury the plants' root balls at the same depth they were growing in their seedling trays or pots. Roman chamomile plants should be spaced about 8 inches apart, while German chamomile needs about 12 inches of growing room. If you're growing chamomile in containers, choose well-draining pots that are at least 6 inches deep by 12 inches wide and fill them with a rich potting mix.
- Don't let indoor-started chamomile seedlings grow too long.

outdoors when the danger of frost has passed.

GROWING

One of the best ways to use chamomile in the garden is as a companion plant. Not only do their flowers attract pollinators and [beneficial bugs](#), but they can also protect other crops from destructive pests. If you want to get the most [companion planting](#) benefits out of chamomile, try growing it near crops like cucumbers, brassicas, and other herbs, and use these care tips to keep your chamomile in bloom!



Aricia agestis, the brown argus butterfly in the family Lycaenidae sitting on a chamomile flower. Credit: Elena Seiryk

Light

Both Roman and German chamomile grow and flower best in full sun locations, but they also tolerate light shade. Chamomile can be sensitive to extreme heat, so you may want to grow it in an area that receives partial afternoon shade if you live in a hot climate.

Water

Newly planted chamomile needs to be watered regularly with about 1-inch of water per week. However, established plants are relatively drought-tolerant and they may only need water during long periods of dry weather.

Fertilizer

Chamomile plants are light feeders that generally don't need fertilizer. In fact, growing these plants in overly rich soil can cause them to produce leggy growth and floppy stems. That said, soil that's super poor in nutrients can also lead to weak growth. But this can be prevented

Humidity

High humidity can sometimes prove challenging to chamomile plants, and lead to issues like [powdery mildew](#). The best way to prevent this is to follow proper spacing guidelines and to keep chamomile leaves dry by watering plants at the soil line.

Seasonal Care

German varieties can withstand light frosts, but it won't survive long periods of cold weather or heavy freezes. These plants should be removed from gardens and composted when they die back in fall. However, you can also move potted German chamomile into a well-lit window indoors if you want to keep it around a little longer.

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Roman varieties typically survives winter with minimal attention, although potted plants are more vulnerable to cold. If you're growing potted Roman chamomile in a cold climate, consider bringing your plants into a well-lit indoor location for the winter. Or protect your plant's roots by wrapping the plant's pot in an old blanket or burying the pot in your garden before the ground freezes.

Propagation

Roman chamomile is usually propagated via root division, while German chamomile can be grown from seeds collected from your garden!

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Dividing Roman Chamomile

- When Roman chamomile starts actively growing in spring, carefully dig up a portion of your plants.
- Using a spade or garden shears, divide the plants into smaller sections that each have healthy stems and roots.
- Replant the divided plants as soon as possible, and water them regularly until they're well-established!

Saving German Chamomile Seeds

- Allow chamomile flowers to dry on your plants.
- Snip the flowers off the plant and into a perforated paper bag.
- Leave the top of the bag open and allow the flowers to fully dry for a week or two in a warm, dry location.
- Use your finger to rub the dried seeds free from the faded flowers, discard

a labeled and dated paper envelope

until spring.

- Seeds usually stay fresh for 3 to 4 years when they're stored in a cool, dry location.
- If you don't want to collect seeds, you can leave the flowerheads in tact and allow German varieties to self-sow!

Types

Roman Chamomile

(Chamaemelum nobile):

- Growth Habit: Low-growing, spreading perennial that forms a dense ground cover.
- Uses: Popular as a ground cover, in herb gardens, or as a lawn alternative.
- Aroma: Sweet, fruity, warm, and herbaceous.
- Flowers: Smaller white blossoms with a yellow center.
- Life Cycle: A long-lived perennial that thrives for multiple years.
- Other Names: Also known as Anthemis nobilis.

- Growth Habit: Upright annual, growing up to 2–3 feet tall.
- Uses: Frequently brewed into tea and used in herbal remedies.
- Aroma: Strong, with a rich apple-like fragrance.
- Flowers: Larger white blooms with a distinct cone-shaped yellow center.
- Life Cycle: Completes its growth within a single season (annual).

HARVESTING

Chamomile is a cut-and-come-again herb that blooms from spring through early fall and is more productive with frequent harvesting. Just wait for the blooms to fully open, then pinch or cut the flowers off the plant's stems, and leave the rest of the stems in place to rebloom. If possible, take your harvests in midday when the weather is warm and dry, and be sure to leave some flowers in place for hungry bees!



Dry and fresh chamomile flowers.
Credit: NewAfrica

Storing Chamomile

Chamomile flowers can be used, fresh or dry, in herbal teas, but they don't last long in the fridge. If you want to keep chamomile flowers around for a while, spread them on screens or racks in a warm, dry location and cover them with a light layer of cheesecloth to keep the dust away. Let the flowers dry for 1 to 2 weeks until they're fully dried and brittle, and then store them in airtight containers in a cool, dark spot until you need them.



GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Chamomile plants are resistant to most pests and they're not enticing to deer.

However, these plants can occasionally be plagued by a few issues!

- **Pests**, like aphids and thrips, can sometimes infest these plants.
- Companion planting chamomile with nasturtiums and other trap crops is

plants are over- or under-fertilized, or if the plants are grown in low light.

Pruning chamomile stems down to 4 or 5-inches above the soil line in mid-season can encourage plants to branch out and produce more blooms.

- **Powdery mildew and brown leaf spots** are usually caused by poor airflow and overhead watering!

WIT AND WISDOM

- “Chamomile” or “camomile” comes from the Greek word “khamaimēlon, which means “earth apple” and refers to chamomile’s slightly apple-like taste.
- In 1998, Russia made chamomile its national flower!
- Chamomile signifies “patience in adversity” in the Victorian language of flowers.
- The herb soothes a nervous stomach and eases depression and anxiety. It is also a major ingredient in Sleepytime tea and is good for insomnia.

- Interested in growing a tea garden?

[See other great herbs.](#)

COOKING NOTES

First, chamomile tea is best with truly fresh flowers. There's no comparison to grocery store tea. Here's how to [dry your herbs for tea](#).

Chamomile is also lovely in food. Google chamomile cake and honey chamomile ice cream to see what else is available.

Finally, chamomile is great for bathing or as a shower steamer. You can also wash your hair with chamomile, and make a [chamomile facial toner](#).

HERBS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lauren Landers

Lauren Landers is a writer and gardener.

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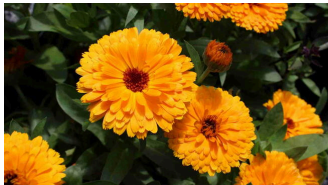
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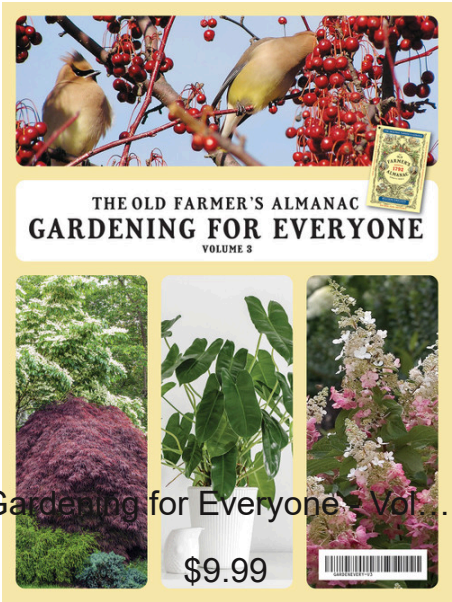
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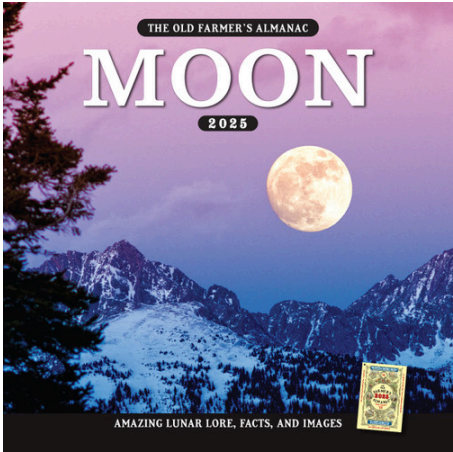
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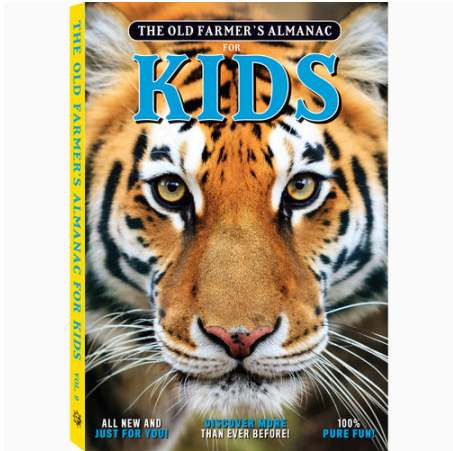
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