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How to Grow Baby's Breath: The Complete Baby's Breath Flower Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Baby's Breath (Gypsophila)

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Famous as that filler flower in bouquets, baby's breath is coming into its own as a feature flower in perennial gardens. Its tiny white flowers bloom from summer through fall. Learn how to successfully plant, grow, and care for baby's breath.

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About Baby's Breath

The baby's breath flower we know belongs to the genus *Gypsophila*. You're probably most familiar with the perennial form of baby's breath, which is a popular behind-the-scenes filler in bouquets, often set-

and wedding flower as well and, fittingly,
a symbol of everlasting love. See the
[Meaning of Flowers](#).

In flower gardens, the small, delicate five-petaled flowers and light green stems create an airy look that's perfect for perennial beds, cottage gardens, and cutting gardens. It nicely hides die-back from spring bulbs and flowers. Plant in groupings. Cut it back after flowering to encourage more blooms. We think baby's breath looks lovely in a vase all on its own in big billowy sprays.

While white is the most common color, baby's breath comes in shades of pink, too! Blooming from late spring or summer through the fall, you can find baby's breath in the wild in fields, roadsides, and open sandy areas. It's drought-resistant and deer-resistant as well.

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While they are dainty and beautiful, they are mildly toxic to pets and can be an irritant to humans, so don't eat them or let Fido chew on them.

Also, check your state's invasive plant list before growing baby's breath. *G. paniculata* is considered an invasive species or a noxious weed in many Western states and other areas like the Great Lakes. In these areas, you may be able to grow annual varieties.

Read Next

- [How to Grow Ranunculus: The Complete Guide](#)
- [20 Pink Flowers for Your Garden \(With Pictures!\)](#)
- [How to Grow Red Spider Lily: The Complete Guide](#)

PLANTING

Baby's breath likes full sun in northern regions and morning sun with a bit of afternoon shade in hotter climates. Hardy to USDA Zones 3 to 9, it will grow in most areas of the U.S. Poor, sandy, or otherwise less fertile soil is fine for Gypsophila. Fertile soil or too much fertilizer can cause excessive vegetative growth and floppy stems, easily knocked down by wind or rain.

It needs well-draining alkaline to neutral soil, not strongly acidic. Excellent drainage is vital, and *Gypsophila* spp. are likely to suffer from root rot in heavier soils with poor drainage.

When to Plant Baby's Breath

Start baby's breath from seed indoors about 6-8 weeks before your last frost date. Perennial varieties can be started as much as ten weeks early.

Direct seeding can be done once the soil warms. Wait to transplant seedlings

started indoors until after your last frost

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How To Plant Baby's Breath

Baby's breath is commonly started from seed, although you may be able to find it in garden centers in the spring.

Starting baby's breath seeds indoors

- Use cell packs, seed flats, or soil blocks. Prepare with a well-moistened

- Sow seeds on the surface and press them gently into the soil—light is required to germinate.
- Apply a dusting of vermiculite if desired to help hold water.
- Cover with a humidity dome or plastic and place under lights.
- They should germinate in 8-14 days. Remove the dome and keep them under lights in a cool location if possible. Keep the soil moist.
- Harden off and plant out after frost danger has passed, utilizing a 12-inch spacing between plants.

Direct seeding

- Prepare the soil bed and rake smooth.
- Plant in shallow trenches and press into the soil but do not cover.
- Water gently to keep the soil moist until the seeds sprout.
- Once true leaves appear, thin to one to two plants every 12 inches.



GROWING

Baby's breath is easy to grow, so easy it takes off in some areas of the country.

Follow these tips for the best quality blooms.

- Baby's breath thrives in drier soil, so don't go overboard with watering. They are well-suited for rock gardens and borders where other plants are not irrigated.
- Too much fertilizer can cause floppy growth. They are perfectly happy in less than ideal soil.
- Pinch plants back to the next node once they have reached 8-12 inches in height to encourage branching.
- Deadheading will encourage more

entire plant within about an inch of the soil level in fall. Don't cut into the graft union if you have a grafted variety of perennial.

- Some varieties get pretty tall, so consider staking them early to keep them neat and tidy.

Types

- 'Pink Creeping' baby's breath (*Gypsophila repens* 'Rosea') is hardy to Zones 4-7 and makes an excellent ground cover. It reaches 6-8 inches in height and will cascade over rocks and stone walls.
- 'Covent Garden Market' (*G. elegans*) is a mid-height annual that makes an excellent filler for flower bouquets.
- 'Snowflake' is a tall, heirloom perennial variety with brilliant white flowers.

HARVESTING



Enjoy baby's breath as a great cut or dried flower.

- Harvest when about $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the blooms on a spray are open and before any of them have started to brown.
- Arrange as a filler in bouquets to show off larger flowers or as one bouquet by itself.
- Harvesting will encourage more blooms and prevent seed formation, so don't be shy.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

- Aphids
- Japanese beetles
- Leaf hoppers
- Rabbits

WIT AND WISDOM

- Gypsophila's willingness to grow in poor soil, like roadside ditches, is not an issue in many areas. It can escape to unwanted spots like the Great Lakes shores' sand dunes, stabilizing the

- Annual baby's breath varieties can be succession planted throughout the spring and summer to provide continuous blooms.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture.

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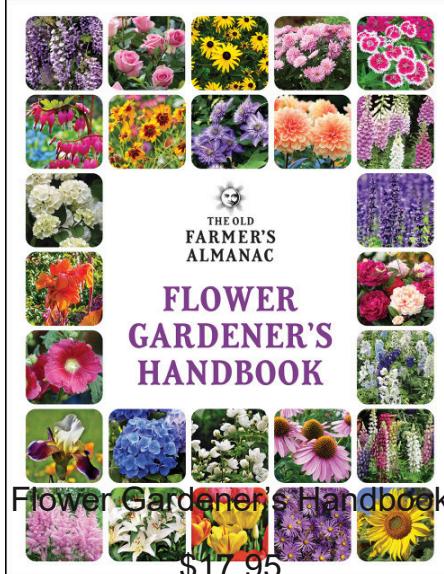
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