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How to Grow Zinnias: The Complete Zinnia Flower Guide



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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Zinnia Flowers

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: April 24, 2025



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Zinnias create a massive burst of color in your garden from summer through the first hard frost of fall. They are annual plants that are best planted from seed. Perfect as cut flowers, they're also food for butterflies! Learn more about growing zinnias.

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About Zinnias - Are Zinnias Perennials?

Zinnias are annuals, so they'll grow for one season to produce flowers and seeds, but the original plant will not come back in subsequent years. They have bright, solitary, daisy-like flower heads on a single, erect stem, which makes them great for use as a cutting flower or as food for [butterflies](#).

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The most popular zinnia species is *Zinnia elegans*, which has been bred to produce a great number of unique varieties.

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Zinnia flowers come in three main kinds: **single**, **double**, or **semi-double**. The distinction between these forms comes from the number of rows of petals and whether or not the center of the flower is visible:

- **Single-flowered zinnias** have a single row of petals and a visible center.
- **Double-flowered zinnias** have numerous rows of petals, and their centers are not visible.
- **Semidouble-flowered zinnias** are somewhere in-between, with numerous rows of petals but visible centers.

In addition to these forms, zinnia flowers come in a number of shapes, including bee-hive, button, and cactus. The plants also come in different heights: taller varieties are best for the background of a garden bed, while shorter varieties work well along a border. There's a zinnia for every garden!

Plant zinnias in an annual or mixed border garden. Smaller zinnias are suitable for edging, [windowboxes](#), or other [containers](#).

Read Next

- [Zinnia Flower Varieties: Colorful, Easy, Fast-Growing!](#)
- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)
- [How to Grow Lilies: The Complete Lily Flower Guide](#)

PLANTING

Choosing a location that gets full sun (6 to 8 hours of sunlight per day) is essential to getting plentiful blooms throughout the season. Additionally, a site that offers good air circulation will help to prevent [foliar diseases](#) such as powdery mildew later in the season.

Zinnias are able to adapt to most soil conditions, but the ideal soil will be rich in organic

ally be between 5.5 and 7.5. If soil is amended with compost (humus), the flowers will grow more quickly. Learn more about [soil amendments](#) and [preparing soil for planting](#).

When to Plant Zinnias

- It's recommended that you grow zinnia from seed right in the garden bed, as they do not like to be transplanted. From seed, they will grow very quickly in the right conditions.
 - **Note:** Zinnias can be [started from seed indoors](#) if you prefer—just transplant them while they're young and do so carefully.
- Zinnias are sensitive to frost, so do not seed until the last frost has passed in your area. [See your local frost dates](#).
- Zinnias will grow in a minimum daytime temperature of about 60°F (16°C), though a range of 74°–84°F (23°–28°C) is preferred.
- Sow a round of seeds every week or so for several weeks to extend the flowering period.



How to Plant Zinnias

- Space plants 4 to 24 inches apart, depending on variety. (Many common varieties are planted 6 inches apart within the row and 2 feet in between rows.) See the back of the seed packet for variety-specific advice.
- Sow zinnia seeds only about 1/4 inch deep.
- Most zinnia varieties grow tall and need staking to prevent their heavy stems from lying on the ground. A few weeks after planting, stake close to the plant stem. Take care not to injure roots.
- Gardeners who grow many zinnias (especially for cutting) stretch pea netting over young plants between stakes and bamboo canes; the zinnia heads are then supported gently by the almost invisible netting.

GROWING

- You'll see zinnia seedlings in only 4 to 7 days for most varieties, though it will be anywhere from several weeks to a couple of months before blooms appear (depending on planting site and climate).
- When seedlings reach 3 inches tall, thin them so that they're 6 to 18 inches apart to maximize air circulation. This reduces the chance of powdery mildew developing.
- Maintain moderate soil moisture and fertilize lightly to maximize growth and blooms.
- After the zinnias flower, cut off the old flowers (a process called deadheading) to encourage more flowers to form.
- [Zinnias are annuals](#) and will die with the first hard frost of fall. However, if you want them to reseed, let the last flowers of the season mature fully and scatter their seeds.

...Zinnias - The Old Farmer's Almanac 6



Types

- Get a full-size flower on a compact plant with cultivars of the **Dreamland**

have fully double flower heads, up to 4 inches across in a wide color range; stems are 8–12 inches tall.

- The **Thumbelina Series** cultivars are dwarf and spreading, with single or semidouble, weather-resistant flower heads in many colors. Their petals are 1-1/4 inch across and stems grow up to 6 inches long.
- The **State Fair Series** are one of the biggest and tallest of them all, with large, double flower heads that are 3 inches across. Stems grow to 30 inches tall.

HARVESTING

- Zinnias generally take 60 to 70 days from seed to flower (though it depends on conditions and variety). They work great in a [flower bouquet](#)!

Saving Zinnia Seeds

To save zinnia seeds for replanting, simply collect a few blossoms that are at least half-way brown and let them dry in a paper bag until the seeds shatter.

- Find the dark, pointed seeds at the bases of outer petals, with more along the center of the flower.

- Dry on a paper towel until hard and almost crisp.
- Store in a paper bag in a dark, dry location until you plant again in the spring.



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PESTS/DISEASES

- Bacterial and fungal spots, powdery mildew, and bacterial wilt may affect zin-

nias. Minimize wetting of foliage and space plants properly to avoid disease.

- Caterpillars, mealybugs, and [spider mites](#) also cause problems. Some leaf damage is not an issue, so avoid spraying unless there's an actual infestation.
- Luckily, zinnias are [deer-resistant](#), so they might help keep nearby flowers from being eaten.

WIT AND WISDOM

- The small, narrow-leaf zinnias work well in hanging baskets and make for nice [dried flowers](#), too.
- It's said that zinnias symbolize thoughts of absent friends. Learn about more [flower meanings here](#).

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the

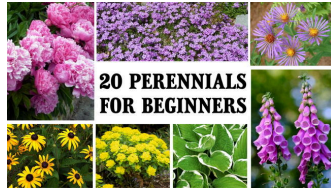
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Roy Baughman (not verified) 9 months 3 weeks ago

Why is my zinnias color fading.

REPLY

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Therese Roemmich (not verified) 9 months 3 weeks ago

I planted the giant size zinna mix and they are now blooming but the flowers are really small.. I could just cry! Have never had this happen before. What happened?

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 9 months 2 weeks ago

Hi Therese,

It's hard to know exactly why this happened, but unfortunately it can and did.

One reason is when zinnias are overcrowded (planted too close together) they can become stunted and produce smaller flowers. If that is not the case, they may not be getting the necessary amount of sun or it may have to do with the conditions either around planting time or during the growing season. Don't be discouraged though, as we have all had growing seasons where things just don't go as planned.

[REPLY](#)**The Editors** 9 months 3 weeks ago

Hi Roy, Zinnia flower colors will often fade with age and in the heat of summer. Sometimes, they'll even turn colors, depending on varieties. However, new growth simultaneously produced new

flushes of bright blooms. Deadhead to encourage more blooms!

REPLY

Rasool (not verified) 1 year ago

Hi.thank you.

REPLY

Hans (not verified) 1 year 10 months ago

My first crack at Zinnias. The first concrete pot planted a month ago produced only six or seven plants, with one only two inches high. I did place the seeds 3/4 of an inch into the new soil, which what I have red is toooooo deep.

The second pot was all metal and it has excellent growth with most of the seeds; all of which are about two inches high or more.

A week later I planted another ground based concrete planter with very mix results. Many of the seeds never developed and

the ones which did, are
only a little over one inch high.

I use David's Seeds out of Texas.

,

BTW, this piece was a very, fabulous read, indeed,
especially for green horns
like meself.

It is too bad one can not download pictures.

REPLY

Terri (not verified) 1 year 6 months ago

Hi Hans, I'm not affiliated with this site,
so I don't know if they have some kind of
license for people to save the photos. I'm
just researching zinnias, like you.

Right-click your mouse over a picture and
there are several options (this is called a
context menu), one being to "save as" and
it will open your file manager and you can
browse to where you want to save it.

cheers

REPLY

J.B. Bulharowski (not verified) 1 year 10 months ago

My zinnia plant had quite a few flower buds (one had bloomed to a gorgeous pink hue) and today I found most of the buds neatly(?) pinched off underneath the plant. Wondered about animal, vegetable (joke) or human hands were responsible for the pruning. The rest of the plant is healthy and tall. Any ideas?

REPLY

Stephanie G Werner (not verified) 1 year 9 months ago

I have found that birds hack into the stem about 3 inches below the bloom and suck out water. Anyone else see this happening?

REPLY

The Editors 1 year 10 months ago

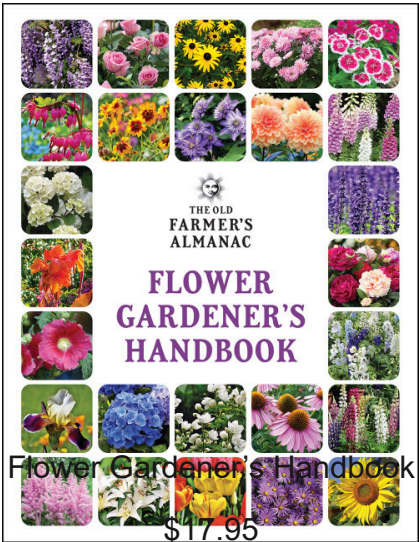
Could it be a groundhog? They are known to like zinnias. Some chipmunks also like zinnias (especially seeds) and squirrels may occasionally nibble. Deer usually do not like zinnias but may eat them in cer-

with clean cuts, while others avoid these flowers. Birds will go after the seeds and pull petals off. Some of these animals will eat during the night.

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

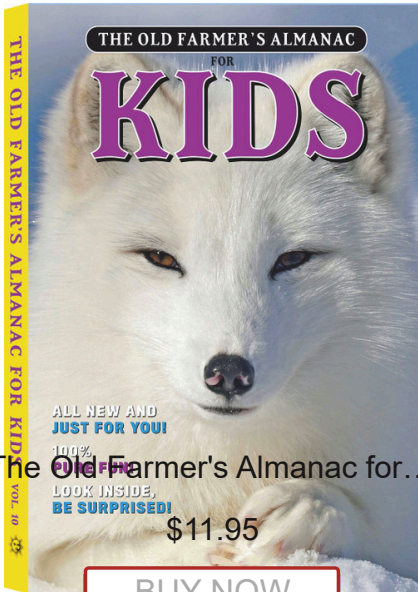
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