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Thursday, May 1, 2025



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How to Grow Astilbes: The Complete Astilbe Flower Guide



Astilbe plant with pink feathery plumes of flowers growing in the garden

Photo Credit: J. Kumpinovica/Shutterstock

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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Astilbes

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: July 2, 2024



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Astilbes are small flowering plants with feathery plumes in pink or white atop fern-like foliage. They add vibrant color to a shady garden, plus they're deer-resistant! Plant in the fall or spring. Learn all about growing the amazing astilbe.

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About Astilbe

nial is hardy to Zone 4. Depending on the variety, the astilbe will provide blooms from late spring to late summer. A few selections are even fall flowering. With proper moisture, the foliage remains attractive throughout its blooming period. They prefer a soil pH of slightly acidic to neutral.

Astilbes (*Astilbe spp.*) are clump-forming perennials belonging to the saxifrage family and arising from a stout rootstock. The upright stems bear fern-like green foliage and feathery plumes extending above the foliage in shades of pink, red, purple, or white. The flower clusters vary in size from 6 inches to 2 feet, and the plant height ranges from 6 inches to 5 feet, depending on the variety.

They'll add a splash of color to perennial borders, wet sites, containers, and groundcovers. The plant attracts butterflies and is resistant to rabbits and deer. The showy flowers are excellent for floral cuttings or use in a dried arrangement.

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PLANTING

Where to Plant Astilbe

Astilbes prefer light to moderate shade, but deep shade will result in few and/or poor flowers; full sun will burn the tender foliage. These plants demand moist, damp soil, but they must also drain well and not ~~muddle which would ensure their failure~~

fertility; astilbe is a heavy feeder. Add perlite and coarse sand to improve drainage.

When to Plant Astilbe

- Astilbe is usually planted as small plants purchased from garden stores in spring or fall.
- Starting from seed is very difficult for the home gardener; astilbe can be difficult to germinate, and resulting plants tend to be short-lived.
- Division is recommended to create new plants at home. Divide existing astilbe plants as soon as you see new growth in early spring.



Astilbes come in many beautiful flowers!

Photo: znmysteryPhoto

How to Plant Astilbe

inches deep. Mix in a handful of compost.

Set the crown (where roots and plant connect) just below the soil line. Backfill with the soil removed from the hole. Water well after planting.

If setting bare-root plants, dig holes twice as wide as the plants' roots and 4 to 6 inches deep. Place the plants so the roots are fanned slightly and pointing downwards, with the crown planted 1 to 2 inches below the ground level. Cover the roots with soil and press firmly.

Water well and keep consistently moist (not soaked).

GROWING

- Check that astilbes are moist. If rain does not occur, water deeply and regularly. Do not sprinkle frequently.
- Astilbes are heavy feeders. Fertilize twice a year. Apply a balanced organic compound in spring and a high nitrogen fertilizer in fall. ([Learn more about soil amendments here.](#))
- Astilbes are a bit slow to establish but then spread quickly, forming broad clumps with crowns that rise about the soil as they grow. Cover the crowns with compost-rich soil—or lift and replant.
- Divide overgrown clumps every 3 to 4 years in the spring. Either replant the divisions immediately or put them in pots to be planted out in the early summer.
- After the bloom period, clip off any spent flower stems. The foliage will hold visual appeal until fall.
- After the first frost, the leaves may be yellow. Trim them if desired. Fresh

Types

Popular astilbe hybrids include ...

- ‘Fanal’ for its dark green foliage and dark crimson flowers; about 1-1/2 feet tall.
- ‘Irrlicht’ for its dark green foliage and elegant white flowers; up to 2 feet tall.
- ‘Venus’ for its bright green foliage and bright pink flowers; up to 3 feet tall.
- ‘Visions’ has strong stems, green leaves, thick raspberry flowers, and is more drought tolerant.

HARVESTING

Cut astilbe flowers and leaves for beautiful arrangements. Vase life is 4 to 12 days. Or, astilbe flowers can be dried. [Learn how to successfully dry flowers.](#)

Note: Removing flower heads (deadheading) will NOT promote continued flowering.



PESTS/DISEASES

Astilbe tends to be rabbit- and deer-resistant

Diseases: bacterial leaf spot, fungal leaf spot, powdery mildew, viruses, Fusarium wilt.

Pests: foliar nematodes, root-knot; tarnished plant bug.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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 Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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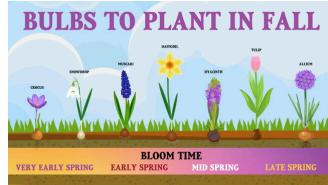
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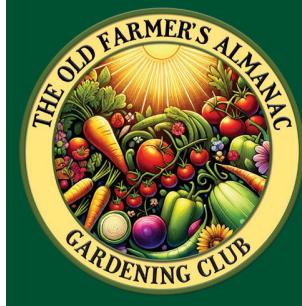
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COMMENTS

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Catherine (not verified) 1 year 1 month ago

Hi there,

I love Astilbe. I have planted 2 in my garden

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straightened up like before. Is it because I did not put the root deep enough in the soil or it's unavoidable after heavy rain because their stem are fragile? Anything should buy to help them stand?

REPLY

Portia Forman (not verified) 1 year 11 months ago

I just received my astilbe bulbs. I live in south-east Michigan. Is it to late to plant the bulbs? Do I need to wait until fall to plant them?

REPLY

Pete Artzer (not verified) 1 year 11 months ago

We just purchased Astilbe Chocolate Kiss and I am noticing that the leaves are rolling up and turning brown, what do I need to do to save this beautiful plant?

REPLY

The Editors 1 year 11 months ago

If astilbe leaves are curling and turning brown, this is usually drought stress. Astilbe need very moist soils in shady spots. Water consistently to keep soil moist (not soggy); add organic mulch to keep the roots cool and moist. Water the plant regularly and only allow the top one inch of the soil to dry out between irrigations.

REPLY

LuEtta Leglerpo (not verified) 4 years 6

months ago

I planted a bare rooted plant several months ago in a pot. How should I winter it? I live in Greeley Colorado

REPLY

Christine (not verified) 4 years 10 months ago

Similar to the comment on May 7, 2020, I

waiting another year before planting something else?

REPLY

The Editors 4 years 10 months ago

As soil warms in spring (such as around May, depending on your location), you should see sprouts appear within 1 to 3 weeks. Often, bare root plants may bloom the first year, but will be stronger, more established during the second year. If your plants are showing no signs of growth, it could be that they did not survive over winter—you might, however, wait a month or so just to be sure.

Here are a few problems that can happen during planting:

1) Cold/frost injury: It's usually recommended that you plant bare root astilbes in spring. In very warm zones, such as Texas or California,

around March and April; and northern zones, around April or May. This is so that the roots will not be injured by winter cold/spring frosts before the plant becomes established. Fall planting can also be done, with care to protect the crown. Be sure to plant crowns about 1 or 2 inches below the surface.

2) Drying out: Astilbes do not like to dry out. That's why planting in summer is not recommended. When receiving bare root plants, try to plant them immediately or keep the roots moist. Ideally, a moist, well-drained spot in part to full shade is best. In especially warm climates, deeper shade is recommended, or you'll need to pay close attention to keeping the soil moist (but not waterlogged).

Hope this helps!

REPLY

Christine Calcinari (not verified) 4 years 11

months ago

I have had other Astilbe at previous residences, but don't remember their growth habit. These plants were planted from bare root last year, I am not seeing any growth yet, as of today, when do Astilbe typically emerge? It has been an unusually cool Spring, still in the 50's sometimes even cooler at night in New Hampshire. I hope I have not lost them.

REPLY

Lela T Simonson (not verified) 5 years ago

I am looking for Astilbe that does not grow taller than 12 inches including the flower. Does this size actually exist in the Astilbe? If so, what is the name? Thank you for your help. Lela

REPLY

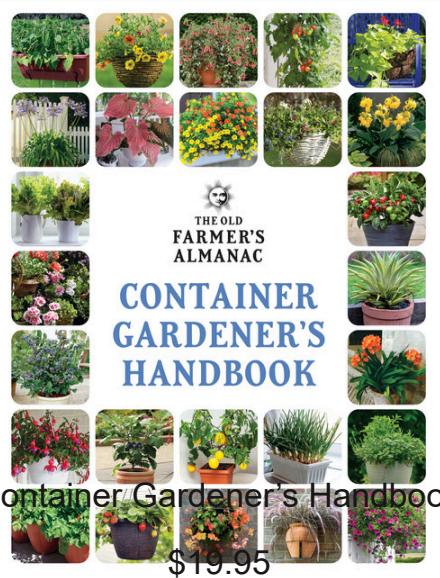
Astilbe chinensis 'Pumila' – Choose this low-growing astilbe if you need an attractive groundcover; it tops out at about six inches high, with lavender flowers that grow to 12 inches.

Many gardeners say the plumes have a delicious grape scent.

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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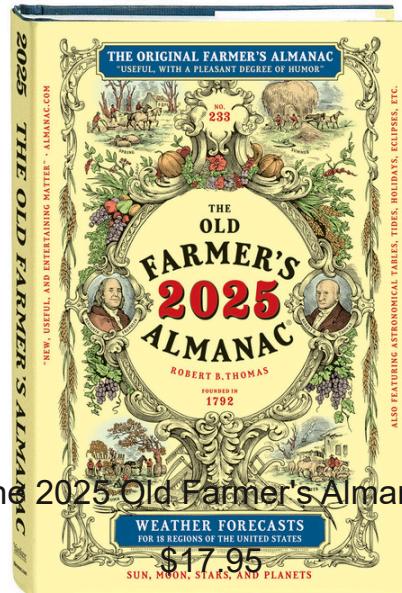
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