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# Marigold Flowers: Planting, Growing, and Caring for Marigolds

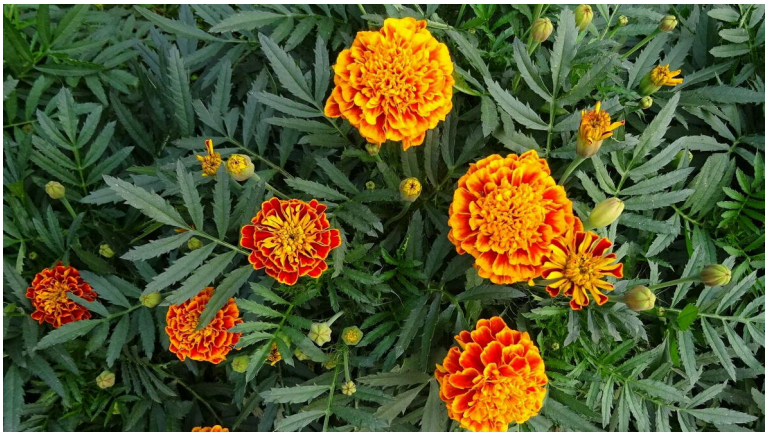


Photo Credit: Pixabay

Botanical Name: *Tagetes spp.*

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Plant Name: Flower

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# The Complete Marigold Flower Guide

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



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Marigolds are the ultimate companion flower. This cheery annual attracts all manner of pollinating insects into the garden. They'll bloom for months, too.

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Learn all about sowing and growing marigolds.

An annual flower, marigolds (*Tagetes*) are the spendthrifts among annuals, bringing a wealth of gold, copper, and brass into our summer and autumn gardens.

Marigolds are a great companion flower to tomatoes, especially greenhouse-grown tomatoes, as their scent helps to deter whiteflies. Dwarf types make good edging plants that may deter rabbits, so include marigolds when you plan your garden.

Some varieties are known for their ability to starve out root-knot nematodes when planted the year before, macerated, and then plowed into the soil, where the chemicals that affect the nematodes are released.

## About Marigolds

Marigolds have daisy- or carnation-like flower heads produced singly or in clusters. Although there are some 50 species, most marigolds we see in the garden are one of the following:

- ***Tagetes erecta*** (aka **African marigolds**, **American marigolds**, or **Mexican marigolds**): This species is the tallest and most upright marigold, reaching 3 to 4 feet in height and producing large, full flowers. According to [Nate Dalman of the University of Minnesota Extension](#), “Despite the names, African marigolds did not originate in Africa and instead are called that because they were first imported to Europe via a trade route that passed through northwest Africa.” They’re native to Mexico and Central America and will thrive even under drought-like conditions.
- ***T. patula*** (aka **French marigolds**): French marigolds tend to be smaller, bushier, and more compact

than *T. erecta*. They are often wider than they are tall. Elegant and eye-catching, they have relatively demure flowers and usually grow from 6 inches to 2 feet tall. They are better suited to rainier conditions than the other *Tagetes* species.

- *T. tenuifolia* (aka **signet marigolds**):

These petite marigolds do well in hot, dry sites and make for a beautiful edging plant. They rarely reach more than a foot in height.

BUY SEEDS NOW

Marigolds have been stereotyped, but they offer tremendous variety. Both the American and French marigolds are generally aromatic, too, although some folks find the scent to be a bit overwhelming. Keep that in mind when choosing a planting site.

**Calendula: Not a True Marigold!**

*Calendula officinalis* (aka **pot marigolds** or **English marigolds**) are native to southern Europe. Although often called a “marigold,” this plant is not a true marigold. However, it is still an attractive companion plant!

Additionally, its bright flowers are edible—with a tangy, peppery taste—so it is often grown alongside herbs in kitchen gardens. [Learn more about growing Calendula!](#)

#### Read Next

- [October Birth Flowers: Marigolds and Cosmos](#)
- [Companion Planting Chart and Guide for Vegetable Gardens](#)
- [Companion Planting With Flowers](#)

## PLANTING

Marigolds thrive in full sunshine and can often withstand very hot summers. African and signet marigolds are drought tolerant, while French marigolds are more tolerant of wet conditions. If planted in shade and

cool, moist areas, marigolds are prone to powdery mildew and won't bloom well.

Though they grow in almost any soil, marigolds do best in moderately fertile, well-draining soil. Prepare the soil by digging down about 6 inches to loosen it, then mix in compost to add fertility and improve consistency.

## When to Plant Marigolds

- Young French and signet marigolds can be planted from spring through midsummer, but the tall African marigolds are best planted right away in the spring (after the danger of frost has passed) because they are slower to mature and produce flowers. [Find local frost dates here.](#)
- Sow seeds directly into the garden once the soil is warm in the spring. You can start seeds indoors, but they germinate so easily outside that there's really no advantage. The exception is African marigolds, best



bought as young plants or started indoors about 4 to 6 weeks before your last frost date.

- Marigolds sprout within a week in warm weather, and plants typically produce blooms in about 8 weeks.

## How to Plant Marigolds

- French marigolds can easily be started from seed, while African marigolds are best purchased as young plants (when started from seed, they can take a long time to flower).
- *Optional:* If soil is nutrient-starved, add some slow-release (granular) fertilizer in the planting hole. A 5-10-5 works fine.
- Moisten the soil, then sow seeds 1 inch apart and no more than 1 inch deep.
- While still small, thin the seedlings. Space French and signet types 8 to 10 inches apart. The larger African marigolds should be at least 10 to 12 inches apart.

- If planting transplants, thoroughly water each plant after planting in the garden.
- If planting in containers, use a soil-based potting mix. Either mix in slow-acting granular fertilizer at planting time or plan to water with diluted liquid fertilizer periodically. Take care to space them properly; marigolds grown in containers can become crowded.



## GROWING

### How to Grow Marigolds

- Once the marigolds have established themselves, pinch off the tops of the plants to encourage them to grow bushier. This will

keep the plants from becoming leggy and will encourage more blooming.

- Marigolds don't *require* deadheading, but if dying blossoms are regularly removed, it will encourage the plant to continue blooming profusely.
- When you water marigolds, allow the soil to dry somewhat between waterings, then water well and repeat the process. Water more in high heat.
- Do not water marigolds from overhead. Water at the base of the plant. (Excess water on leaves can lead to powdery mildew.)
- Do not fertilize marigolds during growth. A diet that's too nitrogen-rich stimulates lush foliage at the expense of flowers.
- The dense, double flowerheads of the African marigolds tend to rot in wet weather.
- Add a layer of mulch between plants to suppress weeds and keep

the soil moist, especially when plants are young.

## How to Deadhead Marigolds

Deadheading is about removing faded flowers by pinching off the flower head. For some plants, including marigolds, pinching off the dead flower heads encourages them to produce more blooms rather than wasting their energy on forming seeds, extending the flowering season. Marigolds also look so much better after deadheading.

Deadheading marigolds is very simple.

When a blossom starts to go bad, pinch (cut) its stem back to the nearest set of leaves.

Whether you're deadheading your annuals, be sure to fertilize as well.

Annuals are very heavy feeders and will respond well.



## Types

Marigolds come in a range of colors—from creamy white to golden orange—and sizes. French marigold varieties tend to be smaller than American/African varieties.

### French Marigolds (*T. patula*)

- **‘Little Hero’ Series:** 7-inch-tall plants with large, double carnation flowers in 7 color combinations of maroon, orange, and yellow.
- **‘Hero’ Series:** 10-inch-tall plants with double carnations, large (2-inch-wide) flowers in 7 different combinations of yellow, orange, and maroon.
- **‘Bonanza’ Series:** 2-inch-wide, double carnation flowers in 5 different

combinations of yellow, orange, and maroon on bushy, compact 8-inch-tall plants.

- **‘Aurora’ Series:** 1-foot-tall plants with wide-petaled, anemone-like flowers in shades of maroon, yellow, and orange.
- **‘Janie’ Series:** Early blooming. 8-inch-tall plants are perfect for container growing. Double carnation type flowers in 6 different combinations of yellow, orange, and maroon.
- **‘Boy O’ Boy’ Series:** 6-inch-tall prolifically flowering plants with flowers in shades of maroon, yellow, and orange



*French Marigolds*

## **American/African Marigolds (*T. erecta*)**

- **‘Jubilee’ Series:** 2-foot-tall plants with dense, double flowers in shades of yellow and orange.
- **‘Gold Coin’ Series:** 1½- to 2-foot-tall plants with large (5-inch-wide) double blooms in gold, yellow, and orange.
- **‘Safari’ Series:** 1-foot-tall plants with flat-topped, large flowers in shades of maroon, yellow, and orange.
- **‘French Vanilla’:** 3-inch-wide flowers are pure creamy white. Minimal scent. Plants are 1½ to 2 feet tall.

## HARVESTING

- In flower arrangements, strip off any leaves underwater in the vase, discouraging the overly pungent odor.
- Marigolds can be dried for long-lasting floral arrangements. Strip foliage from perfect blossoms and hang them upside down.
- You may see “marigolds” listed as edible flowers. In fact, it’s the flow-

ers of *Calendula*—**not** *Tagetes*—that make great additions to a summer dish. **Flowers from *Tagetes* marigolds may be irritating to the skin, so we do not recommend ingesting them.**

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



## PESTS/DISEASES

Marigolds have few pests or problems overall, but spider mites and aphids sometimes infest the plants. Usually, a spray of water or the application of insecticidal soap, repeated every other



day for a week or two, will solve the problem. Occasionally, marigolds will be affected by **fungal diseases** such as powdery mildew if conditions are too wet. To prevent fungal issues, avoid getting water on the marigolds' leaves, keep weeds down, and plant in well-draining soil.

## Marigolds as Companion Plants

Farmers and gardeners have long known that marigolds make important companion plants everywhere.

- The underground workings of the French marigold, in particular, are known to repel harmful nematodes (microscopic worms) that attack the roots of garden vegetables—especially root-knot and lesion nematodes. Crops most impacted include tomatoes, cucumbers, strawberries, snap beans, squash, onions, and garlic.
- To take advantage of this effect, don't plant marigolds directly

alongside vegetables. Instead, plant a mass of marigolds in the spring in the area where you intend to grow a fall crop. In mid-to late summer, remove the marigolds and plant vegetables and greens for a fall harvest.

## WIT AND WISDOM

- In the late 1960s, Burpee president David Burpee launched an energetic campaign to have marigolds named the national flower, but in the end, roses won.
- For years, farmers have included the open-pollinated African marigold 'Crackerjack' in chicken feed to make egg yolks a darker yellow.
- Marigolds are one of the October birth flowers.

## COOKING NOTES

The flowers of *Tagetes marigolds* are  
NOT edible, but those of *Calendula*  
are. The bright petals of *Calendula* add  
color and a spicy tang to salads and  
other summer dishes.

- The flower petals are sometimes  
cooked with rice to impart saffron's  
color (but, unfortunately,  
not flavor).

**FLOWERS**

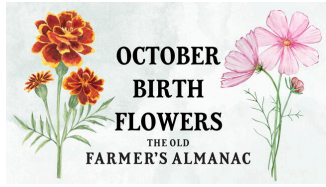
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Catherine Boeckmann

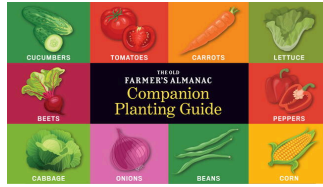


Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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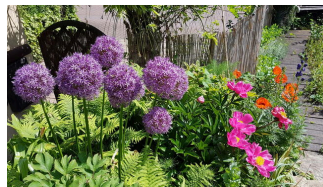


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# COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

**Mike Wurzer (not verified)** 6 months 2 weeks ago

Hi I'm semi retired field crop agronomist in west central Saskatchewan, so I am attempting to learn about horticulture. The building has some cultivated areas along the walls were past residents propagated some marigolds and cherry tomatoes. I saw them coming up as volunteers and started watering them. With the marigolds should I prune

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them back to the ground now since we have  
had a hard frost or wait until spring

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 6 months 2 weeks

ago

Hi Mike,

It's great that you were able to  
give those emerging marigolds  
the boost they needed to make it  
through the season.

Outside of a few shrub varieties,  
marigolds are an annual flower  
that die back completely at the  
end of each season once the frost  
sets in. So you would not prune  
them, but rather remove the en-  
tire plant because it will not come  
back the following year.

What you likely cared for were the  
plants that came from the seeds  
from last year's plants. If

marigolds are not deadheaded, they will readily self-seed the area and plants can/will grow the following year. If you did not dead-head this year as blooms began to fade, there is a chance that seeds fell to the soil once the pods dried and opened, meaning there will hopefully be marigold plants in that same area next season. If not, you can always plant new transplants in the spring once the threat of frost has passed.

Hope this helps!

**REPLY**

---

**Linda (not verified)** 7 months ago

My marigolds are beautiful and huge this year. I recently read that buried plants will benefit garden soil and I was wondering about that. I've always pulled the plants, let them dry and added to my compost. Any suggestions on how to utilize the plants at

the end of the season? I don't have any interest in drying the flowers.

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 7 months ago

Hi, Linda. After your marigolds have had their "day in the sun," you can cut them up into pieces and work them back into the soil. The thinking is that it helps to control pests that may lurk in the soil for the next growing season. But adding them to your compost pile is also a good place for them.

**REPLY**

---

**Pam Gouker (not verified)** 1 year 2 months ago

How about pictures of the various marigolds?

Is "deadheading" and "pinching back" the same



On a flower? Pictures?? Maybe silly but new  
to this.

**REPLY**

**Vandy Bradow (not verified)** 1

year ago

Deadheading refers to removing  
spent flowers from their stems.  
pinching back means removing  
the tip of growth, flowers,buds,  
leaves, stem and all, from the cen-  
tral and largest stem(s).

**REPLY**

---

**judy (not verified)** 1 year 6 months ago

can you plant marigolds and mums around  
each other?

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 6 months ago

Hi Judy,

You can certainly plant marigolds and mums in the same garden area. Both require full sun and well-draining soil.

Just be aware that both can spread quite a bit so you will want to give some space between plantings.

**REPLY**

**Karen (not verified)** 1 year 6 months ago

I have marigolds that have been reseeding themselves for a couple years now. How would I save the seeds to plant in other areas the following spring?

**REPLY**

**The Editors** 1 year 6 months ago

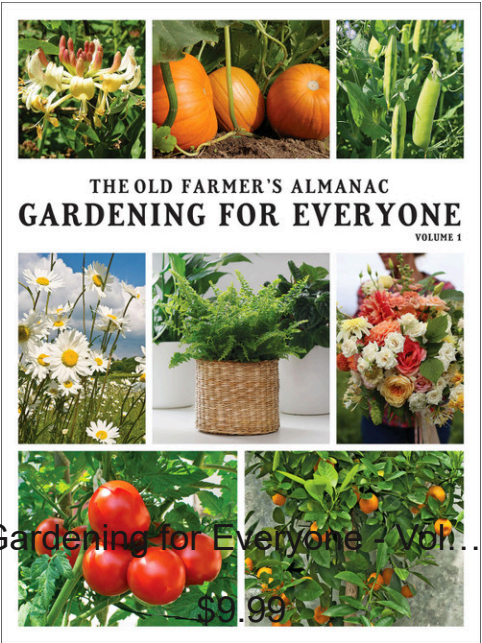
Hi Karen,

Instead of deadheading your marigolds, let spent flowers remain on the plant to dry. As the seed head matures, it will turn brown. To catch seeds you can place a paper bag underneath the spent blooms, but it is not always necessary. Once the seed pod is dry, remove them from the plant and allow to air dry for a few days. Then you can harvest the seeds from the pod and put in an envelope until you are ready to plant in the spring.

**REPLY**

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