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# How to Grow Nigella (Love-in-a-Mist): The Complete Nigella Flower Guide



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Bloom Time: [Spring](#)

Flower Color: [Blue](#), [Pink](#), [Purple](#), [White](#)

Hardiness Zones: [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [7](#), [8](#), [9](#), [10](#), [11](#)

# Planting, Growing, and Caring for Nigella

By [Carol Connare](#)

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This beautiful, old-fashioned flower goes by many names! But whether you call it Nigella, love-in-a-mist, fennel-flower, bishop's-wort, or old man's beard, this annual makes a stunning addition to your gardens and containers. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for Nigella.

## About the Nigella Flower

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*Nigella damascena* is an easy-to-grow annual best known for its lacy foliage; jewel-like blue, pink, lavender, and white flowers on 1-1/2- to 2-foot-tall stems; and uncommonly striped and spiny seed capsules. A cool-weather annual plant hardy in Zones 2 to 11, Nigella, is suitable for in-ground and container planting.

Both the flowers and seedpods, fresh or dried, make eye-catching additions to bouquets and arrangements. [See more flowers that make great additions to cutting gardens.](#)

Nigella is a member of the buttercup family (Ranunculaceae) and a cousin to the [delphinium](#).

## ADVERTISEMENT

Its genus name comes from the Latin word *niger*, meaning “black”—a reference to the color of its seeds. The plant’s species name refers to Damascus, Syria, where the plant grows in the wild.

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- [Growing Pincushion Flowers \(Scabiosa\): A Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Larkspurs: The Complete Larkspur Flower Guide](#)

## PLANTING

Nigella (Love-in-a-mist) grows easily from seed in the ground or soil. Seeds can be started indoors 6 to 8 weeks before the last frost, but this is not recommended, as nigella generally dislikes being transplanted.

(some growers recommend when the soil reaches 60°F). Average, well-draining soil is suitable. Germination occurs in 2 to 3 weeks.

Nigella is one of our favorite self-seeding flowers!

Provide consistent moisture. Learn how to properly water your flowers for healthy growth.

Thin seedlings so that they are up to 8 to 10 inches apart. Too-close plants will become tall and spindly as they reach for sunlight.

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## GROWING

Fertilizer is not necessary. Excessive nitrogen can cause spindly plants, as can excessive wa-

Deadheading will prolong the bloom period but eliminate the seedpods. Nigella will self-seed. To prevent this, remove the seed heads before they mature.

**Growers' only disappointment may be that**

**Nigella is short-lived:** Once established, it will flower for several weeks beginning in late spring. However, in moderate climates (65° to 70°F), successive sowings (every 3 to 4 weeks until midsummer) will keep plants and flowers coming well into the fall. (Note that high heat may cause plants to wilt.)



*Love-in-a-mist flowers, seed pods, and seeds.*

*Photo: Martina Unbehauen*

## Types

- Nigella 'Delft Blue': named for Dutch Delft blue pottery; flowers have blue splashes on white petals and deep-purple centers; 18 to 24 inches tall.
- N. 'Miss Jekyll': soft blue, semi-double

- N. 'Miss Jekyll Alba': pure white, semi-double flowers; 12 to 18 inches tall.
- N. 'Mulberry Rose': deep pink flowers; 18 to 24 inches tall.
- N. 'Persian Jewels' series: double flowers in shades of lavender, light blue, mauve, purple, rose, and white; 18 inches tall.

## HARVESTING

**At the end of the season, dry the seedpods:**

Cut them while green and fresh. Bunch the stems with string or a twist-tie and hang them upside down in a cool, dry, dark location for several weeks. [Learn more about how to save flower seeds for next year.](#)

Susan Mahr of the University of Wisconsin suggests, “Both the flowers and the decorative green and burgundy seed pods can be used in fresh or dried floral arrangements.”

## GARDENING PRODUCTS





## WIT AND WISDOM

- *Nigella damascena* bears many names. One is Katharine's flower, after the saint who suffered martyrdom on a wheel, which is a reference to the way in which the plant's flower parts spread like the spokes of a wheel. A few of its other names include devil-in-a-bush (a reference to its seed-pods), fennel-flower (a reference to its foliage), bishop's-wort, old man's beard, and kiss-me-twice-before-I-rise.
- Do not confuse *N. damascena* with its cousin [N. sativa](#), whose seeds produce edible black cumin.

**FLOWERS**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Carol Connare**



As the 14th Editor-in-Chief of The Old Farmer's Almanac, Carol Connare



Almanac as well as books, calendars,  
and other publications. [Read More](#)  
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