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How to Grow Calendula: The Complete Guide



Botanical
name:
Calendula officinalis

Plant
Type:
[Flower](#)

Season:
[Full Sun](#)

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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Calendula

By [Samantha Johnson](#)

Last Updated: April 10, 2025




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Discover calendula—a cutting flower that blooms from spring to fall! It’s also a fantastic companion plant in the garden, because pollinators absolutely love it. Plus, it’s edible! Learn how to plant, grow, and harvest calendula.

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This truly delightful flowering herb that produces an abundance of 1-inch orange

— — — — —

marigold, with the best characteristics of both.

About Calendula

Calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) is a species of annual and perennial herbaceous plants in the daisy family, Asteraceae. Though native to southern parts of Europe and the Mediterranean region, this plant escaped long ago into gardens in the United States, and is grown in gardens as an **annual flower**. It is hardy in USDA Zones 8 and up and can be grown as a perennial in those areas.

The daisy-like flowers are usually bright orange or yellow; there are also bi-color and white cultivars. The stems are up to 2 feet long and branch out from a compact bushy plant; the leaves are alternating, sometimes aromatic.

Note: *Calendula* are sometimes called “pot marigolds” but they’re actually unrelated to regular *garden marigolds* (*Tagetes*).

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Calendula may be overshadowed by showier specimens like zinnias, snapdragons, and cosmos. Calendula, however, has its own merits. The more you pick, the more she flowers—well into fall—a long-lasting cut flower. Additionally, both the flower and stem are edible and can add color to a salad or pasta. Traditionally, this flowering herb also has medicinal benefits and can be made into a calming tea (see more below).

Pollinators certainly recognize the benefits of calendula. The flowers rapidly draw in the bees and butterflies. From there, the pollinators will likely stick around and pollinate your veggies and other plants at

repel many pests. [See our companion planting guide.](#)

Added bonus: calendula buds are just adorable right before they open. You'll love them.



Pollinators (especially butterflies!) love calendula. Growing these beautiful flowers in your garden will attract these helpful pollinators. Credit: donvikro

Read Next

- [How to Grow Borage Plants: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Lemon Balm: The Complete Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Chamomile: The Complete Herb Guide](#)

PLANTING

Planting calendula is easy! Just keep these

When to Plant

- If direct sowing in your outdoor garden beds, plant your seeds just before your last frost in the spring.
- Or, to get a head-start on calendula blooms, you can start seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before your last frost date.
- If you decide to purchase established plants at a garden center, be sure to give the plants an acclimation period by slowly introducing them to time outdoors, then plant them in the garden after your last frost date and once they've acclimated to the outdoor temps and conditions.
- The University of Wisconsin Extension suggests [succession planting](#) for continuous blooms.

How to Plant

- Calendula seeds don't last very long in storage, so you'll likely want to buy fresh seed each year.
- Whether planting indoors or out, plant the seeds $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep and make sure the seeds are covered with soil.

- Germination rates vary widely, but you can expect to see baby plants popping through the soil in 1 to 2 weeks.
- Space your seeds 4 to 6 inches apart when direct sowing. You can thin them to 8 to 16 inches apart later.
- If you purchase young plants at the garden center, space the seedlings at least 8 inches apart when planting.

GROWING

Caring for calendula plants is quite easy, as they're hardy and “want” to grow well. They adapt quickly to various conditions.

- Calendulas are beautiful in garden beds, but they also grow very well in containers, giving you the opportunity to liven up your patio or porch with their charm.
- Full sun is the best for calendulas—it'll help them blossom more. Some partial shade is okay and they'll grow, but flower production slows down.
- If you live in a location with really hot

- Calendula isn't a fan of hot weather but tolerates quite a bit of cold weather.
- For the best results, your calendulas prefer well-draining soil that is moderately rich. Once they're established, calendulas—like others in the Asteraceae family—aren't particularly fussy about their soil.
- A soil pH of 6.0 to 7.0 is ideal.
- You'll need to water your calendulas regularly when you're starting them from seeds and while the seedlings grow, but mature calendulas are quite self-sufficient and won't need much watering.
- Calendulas benefit from regular deadheading to encourage new blooms. You might also want to trim off the top few inches of the plant if it grows too long and thin (you want your calendulas more bush-like). Deadheading will also help prevent it from self-seeding in your garden.
- They don't hold up well to heavy rains and the blossoms get easily damaged. Enjoy them as fleeting bits of beauty in

certain pests.

Types

The *Calendula* family is populated by about 20 species of annuals and perennials, native to the Mediterranean and middle east regions. But for specific *Calendula officinalis* cultivars, be sure to explore these:

- ‘Neon’ is sure to impress with tall plants, double flowers, and BIG blooms.
- ‘Citrus Cocktail’ is a compact variety that grows well in a container.
- ‘Dwarf Gem’ is another excellent container option.
- ‘Touch of Red’ is a bright orange color, with dark red underneath and on the edges of each petal.
- ‘Golden Princess’ and ‘Ivory Princess’ feature dark centers and great contrast.
- ‘Greenheart Orange’ has green centers!
- ‘Strawberry Blonde’ is as beautiful as

- ‘Alpha’ is my sister’s top choice,—it’s orange and gorgeous.

Also, check out the calendula mixes—they’re a great way to sample a number of beautiful varieties at once!

HARVESTING

Calendulas may be primarily grown for cut flowers, but they also have a few uses in the kitchen.

- You can harvest the entire blossom or just the petals.
- Harvest calendula later in the day once they are totally dry.
- Only harvest blossoms that have opened fully.
- Calendula flowers can be used for garnishes, or even to add a natural food coloring to cheeses.
- For culinary use, you can use fresh or dried calendula. It can be eaten fresh in salads or with rice, or it can be dried and used in teas or as a replacement

this and enjoy another aspect of these flowers!



Calendula are beautiful cut flowers but they have culinary and medicinal uses as well. Credit: JetraTull

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PESTS/DISEASES

are a few insects/slugs that can bother it.

Powdery mildew is probably the main concern and can be an issue if there isn't enough airflow around your plants. All in all, calendulas are fairly hardy and disease resistant, but they can be affected by:

- [Slugs and Snails](#)
- [Aphids](#)
- [Whiteflies](#)
- [Powdery mildew](#)
- Cucumber [mosaic virus](#)
- Cabbage loopers

WIT AND WISDOM

- Calendula has scientifically-based evidence to deter some insect pests.
- This plant were found growing wild in the Holy Land by crusaders who brought them back to Europe. Legend has it that St. Hildegard of Bingen gave the plant the name "Mary's gold" in honor of the Virgin Mary.
- Calendula was recognized as the 2009 Herb of the Year by the International

least two of the three major categories:

medicinal, culinary, or decorative.”

- Historically, calendula has been used to help gastrointestinal issues and skin conditions. Ancient Romans used calendula to treat scorpion stings. In the Middle Ages, calendula was a common remedy for everything from smallpox to indigestion.
- Today’s herbalists use it to make a healing salve for sunburn, chapped lips, minor burns, cuts, and scrapes. See more about [calendula’s healing properties](#).
- Calendula can be used to make yellow fabric dye. It also has cosmetic uses.
- According to the [Utah State University Extension](#), calendula is “antiseptic, antifungal, anti-inflammatory, and can help aid digestion and skin ailments.”

COOKING NOTES

Calendula blossoms can be used in cooking—eaten fresh in salads, added to rice, or dried and used as a poor man’s saffron,

Medicinally, try making a calendula salve recipe. Here's an easy one:

1. Steep 1 cup of fresh calendula petals in 1 cup of olive oil in a glass jar on a sunny windowsill for about a week.
2. Strain the oil.
3. Melt 1/4 cup of beeswax and mix in the oil.
4. Pour into small sterilized jars and seal.
5. Let solidify overnight before using.

For the fullest effect, harvest the petals during the hottest part of the day, when the resins have risen to the surface of the flower.

FLOWERS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Samantha Johnson



Samantha Johnson is an award-winning author and gardening ex-

rural living. [Read More from Samantha Johnson](#)

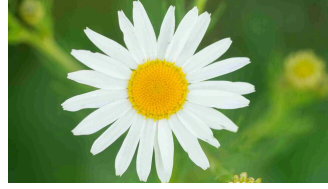
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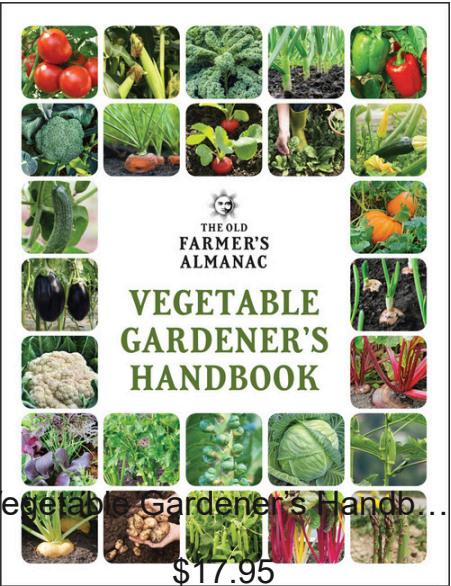
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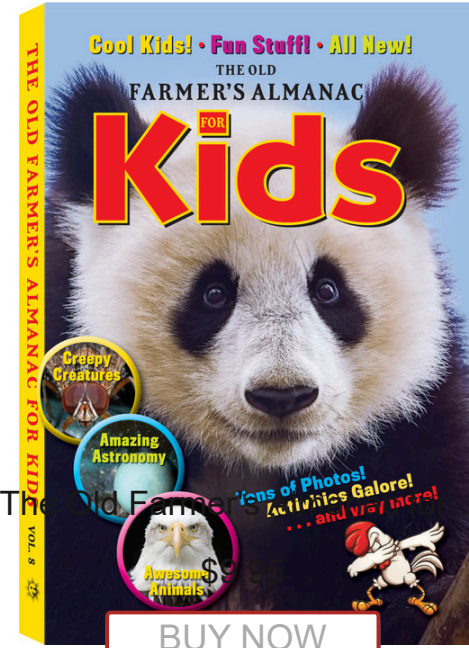
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