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



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FREE GUIDE!



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## Planting, Growing, and Caring for Nigella

By Carol Connare

Last Updated: February 5, 2025









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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.

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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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- <u>Growing Pincushion Flowers (Scabiosa): A</u> <u>Complete Guide</u>
- <u>How to Grow Larkspurs: The Compete</u> <u>Larkspur Flower Guide</u>

#### **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 selfseeding 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 selfseed. 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, semidouble 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.

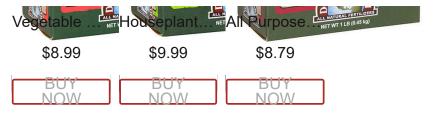
Susan Mahr of the University of Wisconsin suggests, "Both the flowers and the decorative green and burgundy seed pods can be used in fresh or dried floral arrangements."

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#### 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. <u>Read More</u> from Carol Connare

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