



GROWING CALENDULA

Calendulas are easy-to-grow hardy annuals, adding a cheerful splash of colour to your growing space. They can be sown in autumn or spring. Calendulas are edible as well as medicinal, and they're great at attracting beneficial insects into your garden. The petals look pretty in salads and as decoration on cakes; they can be dried to make into a tincture to treat cuts and grazes since they have antimicrobial properties.

Seed Sowing

Calendula is a hardy annual that can be sown in September to overwinter for early blooms in spring or from March to May. Sow seeds either in modules or direct 1 cm deep in rows around 30 cm apart.

Transplanting

Ensure your seedbed is free from weeds; sheltered sunny sites are best, they will tolerate some shade. Can be grown between taller plants and edges of beds to attract beneficial insects. They do prefer poor, free-draining soils.

Plant Care

Keep weed-free and watered during hot spells. You can mulch around the plants to keep in moisture and prevent weeds. Deadhead to prolong flowering and pinch out to create more bushy growth.

Challenges

Aphids like the flowering plants, but predatory insects easily find them on these bright blooms. Powdery mildew can also be an issue; avoid watering in the evening. Water the soil, not the plants and ensure there is enough airflow by not overcrowding.

Harvest

Pick the flower heads often to encourage more flowers to form; they should keep flowering well into autumn. Pluck off the petals and use fresh or dry for later use.

Culinary Ideas

Nothing is better than a sprinkle of bright petals on a salad; calendula has a mild flavour. They are a good source of vitamin A and C, can be used to decorate cakes, added to summer rolls, stirred into cooked rice, and overall make a great garnish. Dried petals can be added to herbal teas or used to make tinctures and balms.

Seed Saving

Calendulas will self seed in situ if left to flower and set seed. You will see the curved spiky tusk like seeds turn from bright green to brown; seeds vary in size and shade. Once the seed heads are brown, you can collect the whole heads to dry indoors for a few days before rubbing and separating the seeds from the chaff before storing in a cool, dry place.