

GROWING FRENCH MARIGOLDS

French Marigolds are easy to grow tender annual adding a cheerful splash of colour to your growing space. Great at attracting beneficial insects into your garden, there is a wide variety of French marigolds available.

Seed Sowing

French Marigolds are annuals that can be sown in a heated propagator from February to March, undercover from March to May, or direct-sown outside in May. Sow seeds in modules or directly on the surface, press firmly onto the soil or compost, and water with a fine spray. Seeds germinate in around 5-14 days.

Transplanting

Ensure your seed bed is free from weeds. Sheltered sunny sites are best, as they do not like shade and can be grown at the edges of beds to attract beneficial insects. They do prefer moist but free-draining soils, so incorporating organic matter is beneficial. Harden off your plants, then transplant at 30 x 30 cm spacing.

Plant Care

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

Challenges

Generally pest and disease-free, young seedlings will need protection from slugs. They do not like cold weather, so if you are in a colder area, sow later for the best results.

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 them fresh or dry for later use.

Culinary Ideas And Uses

French Marigold has a complex flavour and can be stirred into rice for a golden colour; it is a great garnish. Dried petals can be added to herbal teas; in folk medicine, it is used to treat digestive problems. It can also be used to create an orange dye and is called poor man's saffron for this reason.

Seed Saving

Once the seed heads are brown, you can collect them and dry them indoors for a few days or pluck out the seeds directly from the flower head straight from the plants. You can separate seeds before storing in a cool, dry place for up to 5 years.