GROWING RUDBECKIA

A cutting garden staple, the daisy-like blooms pair beautifully with dahlias and sunflowers. It's also a great addition to the garden border, with tall upright stems and flowers from early summer into autumn.

Seed Sowing

Sow seeds indoors in February - April in pots or seed trays to be pricked out. Cover with a fine layer of vermiculite and keep at temperatures of around 20 degrees celsius.

Germination takes around 10-15 days. Cold stratification may improve germination success, as does some warmth.

Transplanting

Transplant outside in May once danger of frost has passed, spacing plants 40cm apart. Rudbeckia can also be grown in containers.

Plant Care

Keep the area weed-free and watered during hot spells. You can mulch around the plants to keep in moisture and prevent weeds. Deadhead to prolong flowering. Stems may need support, especially in windy growing conditions.

Challenges

Rudbeckia are generally pest and disease-free but can be prone to powdery or downy mildew. Make sure to use the recommended spacing and not-overwater to keep the plants happy and less vulnerable to aphids.

Harvest

Pick the flowers often to encourage more flowers to form.

Ideally harvest the flowers in the morning when temperatures are low and plant water content is high. Plants will arrange better if left to sit in water for a few hours after cutting. Rudbeckia have a very long vase life of up to two weeks.

To dry, cut stems and remove lower leaves and hang upside down in bunches in a cool, dark and well ventilated space.

Culinary Ideas And Uses

Rudbeckia are not edible.

Seed Saving

Harvest the individual flowers as they dry or whole plants once most of the flowers on the stem have dried.

Lay out on a sheet or use paper bags around each of the heads, hanging them upside down to dry further. You will be looking for a crisp, brittle cone. Once dried they can be threshed to release the seeds or use your thumb to scrape the seeds free. Winnow to remove any further chaff and clean the seeds.

Store in a cool dark place.

VITAL SEEDS