

BACHELOR'S BUTTONS



Though the classic Bachelor's Button (also called cornflower) is true blue, the flower comes in a variety of colors, including pastel pink, white, and near black. Depending on the variety, blooms reach from 1 to 3 feet tall. This carefree beauty is easy to grow from seed, and makes a colorful addition to meadows and cottage gardens alike. Butterflies and other pollinators love them.

The flower may have gotten its name from an early use—bachelors would wear them in the buttonholes of their suit coats when they went courting. Whether in a buttonhole or a vase, the flowers are good keepers—and they hold their color when dried for winter arrangements as well.

Sow seed in a sunny location one to two weeks before the last frost date for your area or, if your winter is mild, in fall.

1. Prepare. Loosen soil to a depth of 6 to 8 inches using a shovel or fork, and mix in some compost to improve the soil structure and drainage. Fertilize lightly with a slow-release fertilizer. Rake the soil smooth, removing any large clumps and rocks.

2. Plant. Sow Bachelor's Button seeds directly in the garden in spring, about 4 inches apart; cover seeds with $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of soil and press gently.

3. Grow. Water the soil to keep it moist for 7-10 days, until seeds germinate. Once seedlings are a few inches tall, thin them by removing extra plants so the remaining ones are about 6 to 12 inches apart. Pull weeds that sprout nearby, and apply organic mulch, such as bark chips, to control weeds and conserve soil moisture. Plants are drought tolerant, and have a tendency to flop with too much moisture, so don't overwater. If you are growing a tall variety, position a few 2- to 3-foot stakes in the ground when the plants are about a foot tall; tie twine between stakes as the plants grow for light support.

4. Enjoy. Enjoy the carefree nature of Bachelor Buttons in the garden, and also cut the blooms frequently for indoor arrangements, as this will keep the plants blooming. Collect blooms in the morning when they are still half open. Preserve flowers for later use by hanging them upside down in a low-light, airy location.



AT A GLANCE

Exposure: Full sun

Planting time: 1 to 2 weeks before the final frost, or in fall where winters are mild.

Planting depth: $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep

Spacing in row: Sow 4 inches apart; thin to 6 to 12 inches apart.

Time to flower: 50 to 60 days from seed.



Use dwarf varieties of Bachelor's button in containers.



Bachelor's Buttons make excellent cut and dried flowers.