



The typical calendula flower is bright orange or yellow, although more subtle peachy or creamy colors are also available. Their good looks and assorted uses make them great companions plants in the vegetable garden. The edible petals are beautiful sprinkled on a salad; mixed with a soft cheese such as goat or cream cheese, they impart a cheery yellow color. Some like to throw them into a vegetable stock, which is how the flower acquired the common name of “pot marigold.” Considered both an herb and an ornamental flower, calendula is often used as an ingredient in a soothing salve.

Calendula prefers cool temperatures, and tends to stop blooming in the heat of summer, but bounces back reliably as the days grow shorter and the nights cooler. Sow seed in a sunny location one to two weeks before the last frost date for your area. If your winters are mild, you can sow again in late summer for early spring blooms.

- 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 Calendula seeds directly in the garden in spring, about 2 to 4 inches apart. Cover seeds with $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of soil and press gently.
- 3. Grow.** Water the soil to keep it moist for a week or two, until seeds germinate. Once seedlings are a few inches tall, thin them by removing extra plants so the remaining ones are about 8 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 grow best in moist, well-drained soil.
- 4. Enjoy.** Calendulas can be enjoyed in multiple ways—in the garden, on a salad, in a vase, or in a soothing salve. And they are so easy to grow that no garden should be without them. If you plan to use the petals for medicinal or culinary purposes, harvest the flowers whole, as soon as they fully open and after the dew has dried. Dry them completely in a well-ventilated space before storing in an airtight container.



AT A GLANCE

Exposure: Full sun

Planting time: 1 to 2 weeks before the final frost; again in late summer where winters are mild.

Planting depth: 1/4 inch deep

Spacing in row: Sow 2 to 4 inches apart; thin to 8 to 12 inches apart.

Time to flower: 40 to 60 days from seed.



Use shorter varieties of calendula in containers.



Calendula blooms make excellent cut flowers.