



There's a reason marigolds are so popular: they start blooming early in the season and continue to grow more and more beautiful all summer, until the first hard frost finally takes them down. Seedlings are readily available in garden centers, but, started from seed, your garden can be equally spectacular for the minor cost of a packet of seeds. There are several types of marigold, including African, French, and signet, plus a few hybrids. All are easy to grow from seed. They can be sown directly in the garden or started indoors a month before the final frost.

Plant marigolds in full sun. They thrive in moderately fertile, well-drained soil, and flourish in the heat of summer.

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 with a slow-release fertilizer. Rake the soil smooth, removing any large clumps and rocks.

2. Plant. Sow Marigold seeds directly in the garden after danger of frost has passed, about 6 inches apart; cover seeds lightly with 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. Tall varieties can be spaced as much as 2 feet apart, shorter French or signet marigolds can be as close as 8 inches. Check the packet for specific guidance. Pull weeds that sprout nearby, and apply organic mulch, such as bark chips, to control weeds and conserve soil moisture.

4. Enjoy. Marigolds perform beautifully in beds and borders, and in containers. Enjoy them from late spring until frost!



AT A GLANCE



Exposure: Full sun

Planting time: after danger of frost.

Planting depth: 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep

Spacing in row: Sow 4 to 6 inches apart; thin to 8 to 24 inches apart, depending on variety.

Time to flower: 45 to 60 days from seed.



Shorter marigold varieties make excellent container plants.