



Making The Most Of Every Season

The Spring Collections 2024: Pocket Companion & Growing Guide



Ready, Steady, Grow

As spring unfurls its gentle embrace, the joy of gardening blooms anew across the verdant landscapes of the United Kingdom. With the warming sun and the soft patter of April showers, there's a palpable sense of anticipation as gardeners eagerly prepare to sow seeds. There's magic in the act of nurturing life from tiny seeds, tenderly placing them in the rich soil, and watching them sprout into vibrant green shoots. Each day brings a new revelation, as delicate tendrils reach towards the sky, embracing the promise of renewal and growth.

In the tranquil rhythm of the garden, there's a profound connection to the natural world. As the earth awakens from its winter slumber, there's an inherent sense of wonder in witnessing the transformation from seed to seedling, and ultimately to flourishing plant. There's a therapeutic quality to the act of gardening, as hands work the soil, fostering life and coaxing beauty from the earth. Amidst the hustle and bustle of modern life, there's solace to be found in the simplicity of tending to a garden, where the passage of time is marked by the gentle unfurling of leaves and the subtle shift of seasons.

No matter whether you want to fill your borders with flowers, become self-sufficient with food from your allotment, are growing in containers or have a sprawling garden, with Seasons and your Collie Flowers' Pocket Companion guiding you, this spring you'll be able to grow amazing vegetables, herbs and flowers.

Within this digital edition of the Spring Collection's Pocket Companion you'll find information covering all the different seeds sent out across the 6 collections we created for this season. The Pocket Companion sets out tried and trusted methods to succeed with your seed growing and all the details you need to take you through from opening the seed packet through to harvest, including:

- a handy at a glance calendar, completed using a colour coded key, so you know the main stages of growing each seed each month
- details of each plants size, hardiness, preferred growing area as well as timescales for germination and harvest
- detailed sowing and growing instructions.

Happy growing, from

Nic

Sowing & Growing Terminology

Our pocket companions will no doubt reside in the pockets of experienced growers as well as those new to gardening. We all began our knowledge somewhere, so just in case it's helpful to you, here's a glossary of a few terms you'll become familiar with as you grow from seed.

'frost risk has passed': usually late May to early June, when night-time temperatures no longer fall below 0 degrees Celsius and frost is no longer likely.

'germinate/germination': the process of a seed starting to grow, developing a small root and seed leaves.

'prick out': careful movement of a very young seedling, by the seed leave, not stem, from the pot it germinated in to a larger pot or module of its own, to grow on.

'harden off': young plants sown indoors are tender and need to acclimatise to outside conditions before planting out. Place in a sheltered sunny spot outside, or in a cold frame, during the day and bring inside at night. Over a period of 7-10 days increase the time the plants spend outside.

'row': seeds are sown in drills to form a row or a line of vegetables or flowers; seeds are sown in a row to help distinguish the sown seedlings from weeds. Also it allows you to give the correct amount of space for the crops to grow well. It is important to know the distance between rows.

'seed drill': a channel or groove made into the soil, to sow the seeds along. The depth of the drill is determined by the size of the seed. Typically seeds should be sown at a depth three times their width.

'seedling': a tiny plant, usually only with its first leaves growing.

'spacing': the distance between seeds along the drill and also distance between adjacent rows. This is determined by the size of the seed and size of the plant it will grow into. Large plants will need wider spacing between seeds along the drill and between adjacent rows than small plants.

'sow direct': to sow seeds into the soil, usually outside in beds or large containers.

'sow thinly': sprinkle seeds sparingly, so that there is visible space between each seed. If you sow seeds too closely together they will be crowded and will not thrive.

'sow under glass or in a propagator': some seeds must be sown indoors in pots and given some heat to germinate. A sunny windowsill, as well as a greenhouse is a good location for starting off seeds.

'full sun': A position in the garden that receives sun for most of the day.

'thin out seedlings': careful removal of seedlings that are growing too close together. Water the row of seedlings well and then pull out the excess seedlings, leaving a row of single healthy seedlings at the correct spacing from one another.

'transplant': the planting of a small plant, either into a larger pot or from a pot into the final position in the garden, where it will grow on to flower or harvest.

'semi shade / partial sun': The seeds should be sown in a mostly shady place, but with some sun

'successive crops': Crops sown at regular intervals so they mature one after the other.

Basil

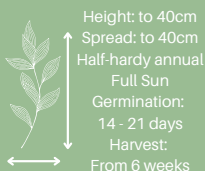


Sow seed February to May on the surface of good free-draining, seed compost. Cover with a fine sprinkling of vermiculite. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a polythene bag until after germination. Keep compost on the dry side at all times, water lightly as seedlings emerge.

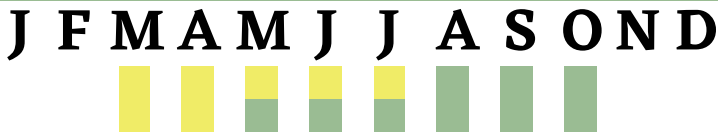
Transplant seedlings when large enough to handle into 7.5cm pots and continue to grow on indoors in cooler conditions. Basil can be kept indoors, making a good companion plant for tomatoes and but also planted out. Acclimatise to outside conditions before planting out after all risk of frost, 30cm apart. Plant into vegetable borders or containers.

Harvest leaves as required, outdoors May to October, all year round indoors. Tear leaves rather than chop, to retain the aroma. Preserve leaves by freezing or steeping in oil.

Flowers may appear from July onwards, pinch our flowers to prolong harvesting period.



Beetroot



Direct sow beetroot seeds outdoors from March to July in a weed free, sunny position in fertile, light, well drained soil. For regular harvests throughout the season, sow seed at 2 to 3 week intervals. The "Boltardy" variety of beetroot is best if you're sowing early. White and golden varieties take less time to grow ready for harvesting.

Sow beetroot seeds thinly in shallow drills at a depth of 1cm and 30cm apart. Water regularly until the leaves begin to sprout. At the beginning, your seeds need plenty of water to start the germination process. The roots will take moisture from the soil once they're established. When large enough to handle, thin out the seedlings within each row to 5 - 7cm apart.

Beetroot can also be grown in containers. If doing so, choose a container at least 20cm deep and 20cm in diameter, filling with good multipurpose compost. Sow at a depth of 1cm, but place the seeds closer together than in the open ground.

Beetroots are ready to harvest when they are the size of a small orange; too large and they won't be as tasty.



Height: to 45cm
Spread: to 30cm
Hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
12 - 24 days
Harvest:
from 8 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Carrots



Early maturing varieties: sow under cloches in March, or unprotected outdoors from April to August.

Maincrop varieties: Sow outdoors from April to June.

Direct sow carrot seed outdoors, in a weed free, sunny position in fertile, light, well drained soil. Carrots dislike freshly manured soils so seed beds are best prepared in autumn, with the soil finely sieved, well in advance of spring sowings. Sow carrot seeds thinly at a depth of 1cm in drills 30cm apart. Germination will take 10 to 20 days. When large enough to handle, thin out the seedlings within each row to 5cm apart. Where space is limited, growing carrots in containers of soil, not compost, will also produce a good crop.

Carrot fly is a well known problem. Prevention is the best cure; sow seed thinly and avoid crushing the foliage as you thin out seedlings or hand weed. Barriers 60cm high will exclude the low-flying female flies who lay the larvae.

Forcing varieties: Some varieties are suitable for forcing to produce an early crop. These can be sown under glass from November to February.



Height: to 45cm
 Spread: to 30cm
 Hardy annual
 Sun or semi-shade
 Germination:
 15 - 28 days
 Harvest:
 from 12 weeks



- Sow inside
- Sow outside
- Plant out
- Harvest

Cauliflower: All The Year Round



Sow seed outdoors in April, September and October into a well prepared seedbed, for transplanting to their final positions later on. Sow at a depth of 2cm and distance of 25cm between rows. Outdoor sowings should be thinned to 7-10cm apart and once plants are 15cm tall, they can be lifted and transplanted to their final planting positions. Protect autumn sowings with a cloche or fleece to protect them through the winter.

Sow indoors from February and March at a depth of 1cm in trays of free-draining, compost and cover with a layer of vermiculite. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Once germinated, grow Cauliflower plants on in cooler conditions until all risk of frost has passed and plants are large enough to be transplanted with 2-3 true leaves.

Gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions before planting out. Gradually harden off before planting out, spacing plants 45cm apart between plants and 60cm between the rows for large curds.

Cover with a protective netting or fleece to prevent attack from birds and insects. Water the plants thoroughly after planting. Feed with a nitrogen-rich liquid food every fortnight.



Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 45cm
Hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
7 - 12 days
Harvest:
From 18 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Summer Cauliflower



Sow seed indoors from February and March for an early harvest. Sow seeds at a depth of 1cm in trays of free-draining, compost and cover with a layer of vermiculite. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Once germinated, grow Cauliflower plants on in cooler conditions until all risk of frost has passed and plants are large enough to be transplanted with 2-3 true leaves.

Direct sow outdoors in April and May into a well prepared seedbed, for transplanting to their final positions later on. Sow at a depth of 1cm and distance of 25cm between rows. Outdoor sowings should be thinned to 7-10cm apart and once plants are 15cm tall, they can be lifted and transplanted to their final planting positions.

Gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions before planting out. Gradually harden off before planting out, spacing plants 45cm apart between plants and 60cm between the rows for large curds.

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Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 45cm
Hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
7 - 12 days
Harvest:
From 18 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Climbing French Bean



Sow climbing bean seeds indoors from mid April for transplanting later on, or direct sow outdoors from late May to July.

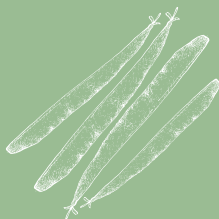
Indoors, sow bean seeds at a depth of 4cm in 7.5cm pots or trays of free-draining, seed sowing compost. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Do not exclude light as this helps germination, and keep pots moist. Once germinated, grow on in cooler conditions until all risk of frost has passed and the climbing bean plants are large enough to be transplanted.

Gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions over 7 - 10 days before planting French beans outdoors in rich fertile, well drained soil in full sun with protection from strong winds. Climbing french beans grow best with support such as a trellis or teepee of 3 to 5 bamboo canes tied at the top with 1 plant per support.

Picking the beans stimulates your plants to produce more and gives you a longer harvest period. Although some bean varieties stay tender as they grow, others become more tough and stringy. Beans are best picked when they are still small and tender.



Height: to 180cm
Spread: to 30cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
7 - 10 days
Harvest:
From 11 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Coriander



A hardy annual herb, Coriander makes a pretty clump of fresh green leaves in a sunny or partially shaded spot, in the ground or in a container. A relative of parsley, coriander is grown for its tangy leaves as well as its aromatic seeds, which are used to flavour many dishes. With careful planning it is possible to have a supply of Coriander all through the year.

Sow seed thinly at a depth of 1cm outdoors in April, June and September in rows 30cm apart. When large enough to handle, thin seedlings to 25cm apart.

Indoors sow seed shallowly in pots or trays in March for planting out in May, once all risk of frost has passed. After germination, and once the plants are large enough to handle pot on into individual 7.5cm pots. You can begin to harvest the leaves from these plants prior to planting out. For October sown seeds, once potted on these should remain indoors, on a cool windowsill with plenty of sunlight, or in a greenhouse for harvesting throughout the winter.

Coriander plants can quickly run to flower if not kept watered. When growing coriander for its leaves, remove the flowering stems as they occur to prolong quality leaf production. However, if you wish to harvest the seed depending on the weather and variety, you should be able to harvest aromatic coriander seeds from spring sown seed in mid to late summer

To harvest the seeds, cut off the plant's withering flowers close to the ground before the seeds are fully ripe. This will stop the seeds from falling off too easily. Hang them on a string (or spread them out) to dry for about two weeks. Coriander seeds are ripe as soon as the seed heads take on a light brown colour.



Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 25cm
Hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
7 - 10 days
Harvest:
From 5 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Cosmos



Cosmos will put on a continuous display throughout the summer months and well into autumn, standing on tall, slender stems which sway in the breeze creating that gorgeous soft and floaty effect. Perfect for a sunny spot in any mixed planting scheme, not only will they look great in the garden and be beneficial to pollinators, but they make lovely cut flowers too. Despite their delicate looks, these plants are pretty tough and will stay standing in rain or a drought.

Sow Cosmos seed indoors from February to April at a depth of 3mm in a good quality seed compost, and cover the seeds with a very fine sprinkling of vermiculite, or compost. Place the seed tray in a propagator or seal it inside a polythene bag, keeping the soil damp but not wet until gemination. Do not exclude light as this aids germination. When seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant into 7cm pots and grow them on in cooler conditions until large enough to plant outdoors. When Cosmos plants are well grown and all risk of frost has passed, acclimatise them to outdoor conditions over 7 to 10 days. Transplant outdoors in full sun in any moist, well drained soil at a distance of 45cm apart.





Alternatively, direct sow Cosmos seed where they are to flower in May. In a weed free area, sow seed thinly in drills 3mm deep. After germination and when the plants are large enough to handle, thin then to 45cm apart. Water regularly, until the plants are established.

Pinch out the growing tip of each stem when transplanting to encourage stems to branch and produce more Cosmos flowers. Deadhead faded Cosmos flowers regularly to encourage more blooms to be produced throughout the summer.



Height: to 100cm
 Spread: to 60cm
 Half-hardy annual
 Full sun
 Germination:
 7 - 15 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Courgette



Sow courgette seed indoors in March and April for transplanting later on, or direct sow outdoors from late May to June.

Sow seed at a depth of 2cm in 7.5cm pots of free-draining compost. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Do not exclude light, as this helps germination. Once germinated, grow on in cooler conditions until all risk of frost has passed and plants are large enough to be transplanted. Gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions before planting outdoors in rich fertile, well drained soil in full sun at a distance of 90cm apart, or into large containers or grow bags.

Cover with a protective netting or fleece to prevent attack from birds and insects. A thick mulch of organic matter spread around the plants will help to conserve moisture at the roots.

Courgette plants usually fruit for many months, from early summer, sometimes through to the first frost. Pick the courgettes when they're young and tasty, 10–12.5cm long. Regular harvesting, when the fruits are small, will encourage more to form.



Height: to 45cm
Spread: to 90cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
7 - 10 days
Harvest:
from 12 weeks



Sow inside



Sow outside



Plant out



Harvest

Cucumber



Sow Cucumber seeds from March to May for indoor cropping and for transplanting later on. Sow 2 cucumber seeds on their sides at a depth of 1cm in a 7.5cm pots of free-draining, seed sowing compost. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Protect the emerging seedlings from direct sunlight to avoid scorching. Prior to transplanting, discard the weaker of the 2 seedlings. Grow Cucumber plants on until they are large enough to be transplanted. Keep the compost moist. When cucumber plants are well grown, transplant them at a spacing of 2 plants per growbag or 45cm apart in a warm, humid greenhouse.

Outdoor varieties may also be direct sown outdoors from May to early June. These should be gradually acclimatised to outdoor conditions before transplanting into warm, well drained, humus rich soil in full sun, with shelter from winds. Plant outdoor cucumbers in single rows at a distance of 90cm apart. Water well after planting until cucumber plants are fully established. Ensure cucumber plants are supported with trellis or canes as they grow.

Unlike some fruits, cucumbers do not continue to develop after harvest. Ripe cucumbers have a firm, green flesh with the "burpless" varieties best harvested at 2.5-4 cm in diameter. Cut the stem 5mm above the fruit.



Height: to 200cm
Spread: to 40cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun or greenhouse
Germination:
5-10 days
Harvest:
From 10 weeks



Digitalis



Digitalis, more commonly known as the Foxglove is a traditional cottage garden flower favourite. Tall elegant spires of trumpet shaped flowers in a wide colour range, including many shades of purples. Attracts bees and butterflies with its lightly sweet fragrance. Digitalis are superb for shady shrub and tree areas, back of borders and excellent for cut flowers. They can really bring the early summer garden alive!

Between April and June sow seed on the surface of lightly firmed moist seed compost and cover with a very light sprinkling of vermiculite. Place seed container in a propagator or a warm place until after germination. After sowing do not exclude light as this helps germination. As the seeds are very fine, we recommend watering from below to avoid washing the seed away or to the edges.

When large enough to handle, transplant seedlings into pots or trays. Then plant out, 60cm apart, into borders when plants are large enough in the autumn after sowing, or over winter plants in a cold frame and plant out the following spring.

Alternatively, sow in June and July outdoors in a well prepared, damp, seed bed. Sow the seeds very thinly 1.5mm in drills 30cm apart, keep the soil damp until germination takes place and thin out the seedlings to 15cm apart when large enough to handle. Transplant 60cm apart into flowering site in the autumn for flowering the following year.

Digitalis will grow in most soils and prefer part shade. Digitalis will often self-seed if you allow the flower spikes to dry into the late Autumn before cutting down, so that the seed is scattered to produce flowers the following year.

Caution: irritant to skin and eyes, toxic if eaten.



Height: to 150cm
Spread: to 30cm
Hardy biennial
Semi-shade
Germination:
20 - 30 days



Sow inside



Sow outside



Plant out



Flower

Fatsia Japonica

SOW AT ANY TIME OF YEAR!

Fatsia Japonica are hardy plants and can be used as a shrub in a shady spot outdoors or as a houseplant indoors. Fatsia doesn't respond well to transplanting and, while cuttings can be used, seeds are the main way that the plant is grown.

Starting seeds indoors or in a greenhouse is best, that way you won't have to consider when to sow fatsia seeds outdoors (I would recommend summer only if you did want to sow them outdoors), where conditions can be too variable. Plant the seeds at twice their depth in a good quality compost. Fatsia requires heat to germinate, if you have a heated propagator this is the best place to start these seeds, otherwise in a sunny windowsill is a good place. Add a little water to the compost and cover the tops of pots with a lid or seal inside a polythene bag to keep seeds and soil warm and moist.

Water as needed, about every few days. You should see germinations in two to four weeks. Remove lid/cover once the seedlings emerge from the soil but keep the pot either in the propagator or on the windowsill for another week or two before continuing to grow in warm (but not hot) conditions. Continue to keep the compost moist, but not wet.

When the plants reach 10-15cm tall pot them on into larger pots and keep them warm. You can continue to grow Fatsia as a houseplant, potting on as required when the plant outgrows its pot, or transplant seedlings outside to their permanent beds once the soil outdoors between May and September.

To help the plant get established, feed it regularly with a weak all purpose fertiliser between Spring and Autumn for the first few years.



Height: to 200cm
Spread: to 200cm
Perennial Shrub
Semi-shade
Germination:
14 - 28 days



Lavatera

J F M A M J J A S O N D



Lavatera come in both dwarf and tall varieties, both with a nice bushy habit and the dark green leaves contrast wonderfully with the glistening flowers which come in so many shades. Lavatera flowers in the first year from an early sowing, attracting bees and butterflies as well as being a stunning cut flower.

Sow seeds from in Spring and Autumn in individual pots or module trays of moist seed compost and cover seeds with a very fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place container in a propagator or warm place, and keep at a temperature of between 20-25C. After sowing, do not exclude light as this helps germination. Keep the surface of the compost moist but not waterlogged. When well grown, gradually acclimatise young plants to outdoor conditions for a few weeks before planting out after all risk of frost, 20-30cm apart, taking care not to damage the root system. Plant out Autumn sowings in March time, they will be well developed to handle any further light frosts.

Lavatera can also be sown outside in April and May once the soil has warmed, 3mm deep in drills 30cm apart in well-cultivated soil which has been raked to a fine tilth.

TOP TIP: Avoid feeding plants, as Lavatera grown in rich soil will have lush foliage and fewer flowers. It may self-sow.



Height: to 100cm
Spread: to 40cm
Half Hardy Annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 - 24 days



Sow inside



Sow outside



Plant out



Flower

Lettuce, Mixed Leaves



Direct sow lettuce seeds outdoors from March to September into well prepared, fertile, moist soil in sun or semi shade.

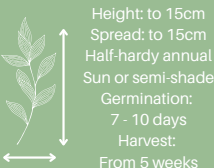
Sow seeds thinly at a depth of 1cm in drills 30cm apart in soil which has been raked to a fine tilth. We recommend watering the drill before sowing the seed as lettuce seed is fine and can easily be washed away with a first heavy watering.

When seedlings large enough to handle, thin out to 30cm apart and cover with a protective netting or fleece to prevent attack from birds and insects.

Sow successively, every 2 to 3 weeks for a long-lasting harvest of fresh salad leaves.

Lettuce is great for growing in troughs, window boxes or pots as well as rows in the kitchen garden. Pick the leaves straight from the plants as and when needed and more will grow in their place. Pick leaves by cutting with scissors rather than ripping away from the plant.

Water well in hot weather to guard against bolting.



Cantaloupe Melon



There is nothing quite as wonderful as the sweet fragrance of a crop of melons in a greenhouse. Sow Melon seed indoors on edge (not flat) to prevent rotting 1.5cm deep in individual 9cm pots in a greenhouse, propagator or on a sunny windowsill.

When the plants are about 10cm tall, plant out into final positions into large pots or growbags either in a greenhouse or sunny conservatory. Water regularly, and feed with an all purpose fertiliser once a week after the fruits begin to form

Melons need to be provided with some form of support and the stems should be tied in as required. Once the main stem reaches 60cm, pinch out the growing tip to encourage side laterals to grow. Select the four strongest laterals then pinch these out once they have produced 3 more leaves to encourage more side breaks. These side breaks should be pinched out after 2 leaves, then allow a further side break to grow and pinch out after 1 leaf.

Hand pollination will be required, remove male flowers after they have been used. There are a couple other ways to hand pollinate your cantaloupe plants:

1. You can use an artist paint brush to transfer the pollen, however, this method is time consuming and not as effective.
2. The best way to hand pollinate your cantaloupe plants is by using your hand and plucking a male flower and transferring the pollen to the female flower.

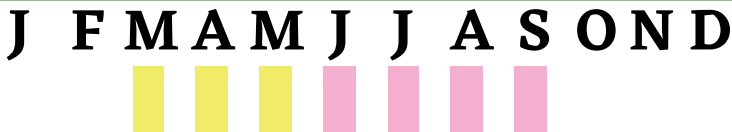
Check your melons regularly as the harvest time draws near. Look at the rind and prepare to pick them when they change from green to tan or yellow. Another indication of ripeness is a crack in the stem where it attaches to the fruit.



Height: to 100cm
Spread: to 100cm
Tender annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 14 days
Harvest:
From 12 weeks



Nasturtium



The nasturtium is a cheerful and easy-to-grow flower! Their bold blooms and edible leaves, flowers, and seedpods make them an especially fun flower for kids to plant and a favorite companion plant in the garden. These lovely plants, with their unique greenery and vibrant flowers, grow well in containers or as ground cover around vegetable gardens. In fact, they are often used as a trap crop in companion planting, drawing aphids and other garden pests away from the more valuable vegetables.

Nasturtium is a good companion plant for: bean, broccoli, cabbage, cucumber, kale, melon, pumpkin, and radish.

Pests aren't the only thing nasturtiums attract, however. They are also a favorite of pollinators like bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, and their pretty fragrance makes them a good choice for cut-flower gardens, too.

Sow outdoors where they are to flower. Prepare the ground well and rake to a fine tilth before sowing. Sow thinly in a weed free flowering site or direct into tubs and hanging baskets about 2cm deep. As the seedlings grow, thin out to 25cm apart. The surplus seedlings can be transplanted into prepared tubs and hanging baskets.


Water regularly until plants are fully established. Growing nasturtiums is easy and once established, they require little attention.

An important feature of all nasturtiums is their edibility! Nasturtiums' leaves, flowers, and seedpods have a peppery, almost mustard-like taste, which makes them lovely as a garnish in salads. The seedpods may also be pickled and used like capers.

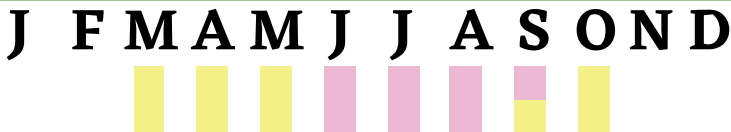


Height: to 200cm
Spread: to 45cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
10-12 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Nigella



Nigella, also known as Love-in-a-mist, is a wonderful cottage garden plant and a great filler. The airy foliage makes a nice complement to broader-leaved plants. Nigella is a short-lived plant and probably won't make it through an entire growing season. For continuous blooms throughout the summer, make succession plantings every three weeks. Once your plants have begun to scatter seeds on their own, you won't need to continue sowing.

Culinary note: The seeds of Nigella have a strong aroma and spicy taste, they can be used as a condiment or spice to flavour cakes, breads and curries.



Sow seed outdoors where they are to flower, Nigella do not transplant very well. Prepare the ground by raking until it is fine and crumbly, removing any large stones. Sow 5mm deep, either in rows 30cm apart, or by broadcasting the seed into the desired growing area and raking it over. When large enough to handle, thin seedlings to 15cm apart.

Nigella is fast growing so dead heading encourages new flowers. For dried arrangements, cut seed heads before they burst open.



Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 35cm
Hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
14 - 21 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Pea



Direct sow outdoors: 5cm deep in flat-bottomed drills spaced 5cm, and in rows 80cm apart. For regular harvest sow sucessionally, every 10 day or so March to May. If the weather is unseasonably cold, start your peas off in a greenhouse or on a sunny windowsill, and transfer your seedlings into the garden when temperatures rise.

Improve your soil by digging in well rotted manure or compost. Prepare the soil by raking until it is fine and crumbly, removing any large stones. Water the drill before sowing to stimulate germination.

When plants are 10cm tall provide twiggy sticks for support. Peas can be protected with netting if pigeons are a problem.

The peas will be ready to harvest around 11-15 weeks from sowing date, and regular picking will encourage further cropping. Shelling varieties are ready to pick once the pods are swollen with peas. Mangetouts are best picked while the young pods are still completely flat while Sugar Snaps should be harvested when the pods are semi-mature and just beginning to swell.



Height: to 180cm
Spread: to 60cm
Hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
21 - 30 days
Harvest:
From 11 - 15 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Penstemon



Penstemon; these elegant easy-to-grow border plants send up spires of tubular flowers in a range of gorgeous colours. From sky blue to rich plum, deep purple to powdery pink, they flower across the summer months, and like a warm, sunny spot.

Sow Penstemon indoors between February to April. Place seed on the surface of a good free draining, damp, seed compost. Cover with a very fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a polythene bag until germination. Do not exclude light, as this helps germination. Germination is slow, but don't lose patience, it is always worth retaining your seed tray through the summer if you've had low rates of germination to see if anything happens and if so you can pot-on and overwinter these plants for use the next year.


Transplant seedlings when large enough to handle into pots. Grow on in cooler conditions for 10 to 15 days before planting out after risk of frost, 60cm apart. Water well until plant are established.

Plants will prove hardy if wet winter conditions are avoided.



Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 50cm
Hardy perennial
Full sun
Germination:
1 - 3 months



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Phlox



Phlox are herbaceous plants that bear a profusion of small, often scented flowers in summer. They range from tall border perennials to creeping phlox or alpine varieties and woodland types, as well as annual varieties that can be grown as bedding; those are the varieties we focus on at Collie Flowers and have available in our range of seeds. As well as being fragrant and long-flowering, most cultivars attract a variety of bees and other pollinating insects.

Sow annual phlox from late winter to late spring on the surface of a good seed compost and gently firm down. Do not cover the seed. Place the seed tray in a propagator or seal it inside a polythene bag, keeping the soil damp but not wet. Do not exclude light as this aids germination.



When seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant and grow them on in cooler conditions until large enough to plant outdoors. When plants are well grown and all risk of frost has passed, acclimatise them to outdoor conditions over 7 to 10 days. Transplant outdoors in full sun on moist, fertile, well drained soil at a distance of 30cm apart, or into containers of peat free compost.

Phlox don't like drought - you may notice the foliage wilting in dry weather. Your plant should perk up after it has been watered. In hot weather, water in the morning, making sure plenty of water reaches the roots. Feed and water phlox plants frequently throughout the summer. Deadhead faded phlox flowers to promote more blooms and extend the flowering period.

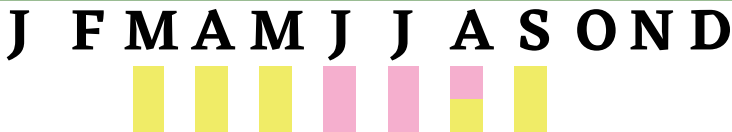


Height: to 100cm
Spread: to 45cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 - 21 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Poppy / Papaver



A sprinkling of scarlet red blooms among swaying meadow grasses creates the perfect picture of the British countryside. The iconic wild poppy is instantly recognisable by its gently fluttering petals.

Poppy is the common name for plants in the Papaveraceae family. Within this group there are annuals, perennials and biennials. They include oriental poppies, field poppies, Welsh poppies and Himalayan poppies. Their summer flowers may be fleeting but they make a wonderful addition to the garden. Large-flowered oriental poppies are the most popular poppy to grow. They have hairy flower stems and foliage. Flower petals can be ruffled, crimped or shaggy, and range in colour from white to pink, purple and red.

Direct sow Poppy seeds outdoors where they are to grow in spring or autumn. Choose a position in full sun on fertile, well drained soil which has been raked to a fine tilth. Sow seeds thinly, just below the soil surface. Water the ground regularly, especially during dry periods. When seedlings are large enough to handle, thin them out to 30cm apart.

Feed and water poppy plants frequently throughout the summer. Annual Poppies can be left to set seed and die back naturally, before discarding the plants on the compost heap. The fallen seed will germinate in the following year to provide a new display. Poppy seed heads can also make a stunning addition to vases.

Caution: All poppies are poisonous.



Height: to 90cm
Spread: to 25cm
Hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
7 - 14 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Rudbeckia



Rudbeckia works well in borders through to Autumn with its weather resistant blooms bouncing back from rainfall. Flowers in the first year, attracting bees and butterflies as well as being a stunning cut flower.

Sow seeds from in Spring and Autumn in individual pots or module trays of moist seed compost and cover seeds with a very fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place container in a propagator or warm place, and keep at a temperature of between 20-25C. After sowing, do not exclude light as this helps germination. Keep the surface of the compost moist but not waterlogged.




When well grown, gradually acclimatise young plants to outdoor conditions for a few weeks before planting out after all risk of frost, 20-30cm apart, taking care not to damage the root system. Plant out Autumn sowings in March time, they will be well developed to handle any further light frosts.

TOP TIP: Rudbeckia is usually grown as an annual but may overwinter in mild conditions and will flower more strongly in second year and last a few years in sheltered locations on free-draining soil.



Height: to 60cm
Spread: to 30cm
Half Hardy Annual
Full sun
Germination:
7 - 21 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

Runner Bean



Sow runner bean seed indoors from mid March for transplanting later on, or direct sow outdoors from mid April to late June.

Indoors, sow seed at a depth of 5cm in 7.5cm pots or trays of free-draining, seed sowing compost. Place in a propagator or seal container inside a plastic bag until germination. Once germinated, grow runner beans on in cooler conditions until all risk of frost has passed and runner bean plants are large enough to be transplanted. Gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions over 7 - 10 days before planting runner beans outdoors in rich fertile, well drained soil in full sun or semi shade with protection from strong winds. Avoid freshly manured soil which will promote lush foliage instead of beans.

Alternatively direct sow runner beans outdoors at a depth of 5cm and a distance of 30cm apart. Plant runner beans in rows that are 1.5m apart, or where space is limited, grow beans onto a wigwam structure. Runner beans require support from garden canes, strings or netting which should be put in place at the time of planting.

When growing runner beans provide a thick mulch of organic matter around the base of the plants to help conserve moisture and reduce weed growth. Water runner beans regularly, particularly as the flowers develop, and provide a liquid feed every 14 days during mid-summer. Pinch out the tips of the beans when they reach the top of their supports. Beans can be harvested from July onwards. Pick the beans regularly and a little on the young side to ensure top quality and prolonged cropping.



Sambucus Nigra

SOW AT ANY TIME OF YEAR!

Common elder, *Sambucus nigra*, is a pretty, native shrub or small ornamental tree with tiny white, fragrant flowers in early summer followed by small black fruits. The foliage is also attractive, with almost black-leaves. Elder flowers can be used to infuse syrups, cordial and gin and elder berries can be used to make syrups and wine – they should not be eaten raw as they can cause nausea.

The seeds of *Sambucus Nigra* can be sown at any time of year. To begin, soak the seeds for 24 hours then dry them on a paper towel. Sow the seeds 1cm deep in a good quality compost. Add a little water to the compost and cover the tops of pots with a lid or seal inside a polythene bag to keep seeds and soil warm and moist, high humidity is required for *Sambucus* seeds to germinate, keeping them on a sunny windowsill or in a propagator will yield the best results. Once you see seedlings, remove any covering and place the pot/tray in a bright, sunny spot, but out of direct sunlight.

In about three months, your seedlings should be big enough to transplant into individual pots or directly into the ground. If planting them out be sure to harden them off before planting. Choose a site with well-draining soil and in a spot that gets six hours of sunlight each day. Elderberry plants are hardy, so they can tolerate some shade, but they prefer full sun. Make sure to water the plants regularly in the first year.

Prune the plants in late winter or early spring to encourage new growth. Elderberries also love nitrogen-rich soil, either mulch them with compost or feed using a nitrogen-based fertiliser.



Height: to 300cm
Spread: to 200cm
Perennial Shrub
Sun / Semi-shade
Germination:
14 - 21 days



Squash



Squashes come in a huge range of shapes and sizes, from massive pumpkins to tiny patty pans. They can grow snaking along the ground or up on a trellis, or other sturdy support.

From mid- to late April, sow the flat seeds on their side, 13mm deep, in 7.5cm pots of compost and keep in a greenhouse. Seeds can also be sown outdoors in the spot where they are to grow in late May or early June. Sow two or three seeds at each sowing site or in each pot. Leave in place for two weeks, or as long as possible, after germination. Thin the seedlings to leave the strongest one.

Indoor sown plants should be hardened off before planting out. Leave at least 1 metre between squash plants to avoid overcrowding. Squashes can be grown in fertile ground, and also in containers or growbags. Keep the soil or compost constantly moist by watering around the plants, not over them, this ensures the water goes down to the roots and doesn't sit around the neck of the plant, which can lead to rotting. Feed every 10-14 days with a high potassium liquid fertiliser, such as a tomato feed, once the first fruits start to swell.

Summer squash produce fruit for several months, from mid-summer onwards, sometimes right up to the first frost. Harvest their fruits when small and tasty, with a soft skin. Regular picking will encourage further fruits to form.

With winter squashes for storing, let the fruit mature on the plant and remove before the first frost. Ripen the skin until hard, by placing fruits in the sun for a week, either outdoors or in a greenhouse. This helps to ensure they keep well.



Height: to 45cm
 Spread: to 150cm
 Half-hardy annual
 Full sun
 Germination:
 5 - 5 days
 Harvest:
 From 11 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Sunflower



Sunflowers come in a range of sizes and colours, with many now having multipol flower heads from a single stalk.

Sow indoors in March and April in individual 9cm pots. Sow 2 seeds per pot, 1cm deep in compost. Discard the weakest seedling after germination. Grow on until the risk of frost has passed, gradually acclimatising the plants before planting out.

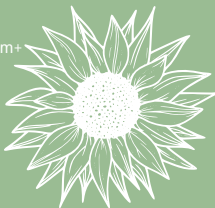
Alternatively from April to June sow seeds thinly, 1cm deep in drills 30cm apart in well cultivated soil raked to a fine tilth. When large enough to handle, thin seedlings to 30cm apart.

Sunflowers prefer a well drained soil in full sun. Tall varieties may need staking if sited in a particularly windy area.

For varieties offering multiple flowerheads deadhead regularly to encourage continuous flowering. If space allows once the flowers are spent at the end of the season leave the heads to form seeds which will provide food for wildlife through the winter.



Height: from 45cm to 300cm+
Spread: to 30cm
Hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 - 21 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest
-  Flower

Sweetcorn



Sow sweetcorn seeds from April to May in 7cm pots of free draining seed compost at a depth of 2cm. Place in a propagator or seal inside a polythene bag until after germination. After germination, grow sweetcorn plants on in cooler conditions for 10 - 14 days. For an extended harvest sow seeds three times, three weeks apart.

When all risk of frost is passed, transplant into fertile, well drained soil in full sun, with shelter from winds. The tassels at the top of the plant and laden with pollen and are wind pollinated and should therefore be planted in blocks rather than rows to ensure good pollination. Plant 40cm between each plant.

Direct sow sweetcorn seeds outdoors in blocks, not rows in May once the soil has warmed, 2cm deep and a distance of 40cm apart. Sow 2 seeds per station and thin out the weakest seedling after germination.

'Supersweet' cultivars, such as those available from Collie Flowers, are much sweeter than the older varieties and retain their sweetness for longer, but are less vigorous. Take care not to grow Supersweet plants next to other cultivars, as cross-pollination can result in poor flavour.



Sweet Peppers



Sow sweet pepper seeds on the surface of a good, free-draining, damp, seed sowing mix and cover with a fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place seed trays in a propagator until after germination and ensure they receive plenty of sunlight.

When seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant into individual 7.5cm pots and grow on in cooler conditions. When plants are well grown and all risk of frost has passed, transplant them into grow bags or containers, or plant them in well prepared beds of fertile, moist, well drained soil. Peppers may be grown undercover in a greenhouse or polytunnel, or outdoors in a sheltered position in full sun at a distance of 60cm apart.

When growing peppers outdoors, gradually acclimatise them to outdoor conditions prior to transplanting them in June.

Once you see flowers, you can expect to see sweet peppers begin to form in about two weeks. They will then take about five weeks to reach their full size and two more weeks after that to ripen and change color. All sweet pepper plants will produce green peppers first.



Height: to 90cm
Spread: to 50cm
Half-hardy annual
Sun or semi-shade
Germination:
7 - 21 days
Harvest:
From 15 weeks



Sow inside



Sow outside



Plant out



Harvest

Tomato



Sow seeds February to April on the surface of a good, free-draining, damp, seed sowing mix and cover with a fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place seed trays in a propagator until after germination. When seedlings gain 2 true leaves, transplant into individual 7.5cm pots, and grow on.

In a greenhouse tomato plants may be transplanted at the end of May or when the first flowers are showing, if earlier. Allow 3 plants per growbag, or one per 25cm pot, or plant directly into the greenhouse soil.

When growing tomatoes outdoors, wait until all risk of frost has passed before transplanting. Gradually acclimatise to outdoor conditions before planting out from early June when plants are at least 20cm tall. Choose a sheltered position in full sun on fertile, reliably moist, well drained soil, and transplant at a distance of 60cm apart.

For cordon varieties put a cane into the soil next to each plant to support them as they grow, and tie each main stem to its support with soft garden twine. From late June cut back the leaves by half to allow air to circulate and light to access the fruits, helping avoid blight and promote ripening. Incorporate a weekly feed into your watering schedule once the first truss has set.



Height: to 150cm
Spread: to 50cm
Half hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
5 - 10 days
Harvest:
From 10 weeks



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Harvest

Uncina

SOW AT ANY TIME OF YEAR!

Uncinia rubra commonly known as Hook Sedge, is a striking ornamental grass with unique characteristics. The 'Everflame' variety of *Uncinia rubra* is celebrated for its vibrant foliage, which undergoes a captivating transformation throughout the seasons. The plant's arching, copper-colored leaves emerge with fiery red tips, creating a flame-like effect that inspired its name. As the seasons progress, the foliage maintains its warm tones, providing year-round visual interest - which is what makes it a perfect plant to include within Seasons by Collie Flowers!

Uncinia can be sown at any time, in a well-lit position, into a good, soil-based compost. Cover seeds thinly and keep moist at around 15 degrees C, this species can be very slow to germinate and may need cooler temperatures before they will come up. Grass seedlings should be potted on and grown on singly, or in clumps for more rapid establishment of a large specimen.

Uncinia forms dense, clumping mounds that reach a height of up to 45 cm. This compact habit makes it a versatile choice for various garden settings, including borders, rock gardens, or containers. The gracefully arching leaves add an elegant and textural element. Well-suited for moist or wet soils, reflecting its natural habitat along stream margins in New Zealand. Its adaptability to a range of growing conditions, coupled with its distinctive foliage, makes it a valuable addition to gardens.



Watermelon



There is nothing quite as wonderful as the sweet fragrance of a crop of melons in a greenhouse. Sow Melon seed indoors on edge (not flat) to prevent rotting 1.5cm deep in individual 9cm pots in a greenhouse, propagator or on a sunny windowsill.

When the plants are about 10cm tall, plant out into final positions into large pots or growbags either in a greenhouse or sunny conservatory. Water regularly, and feed with an all purpose fertiliser once a week after the fruits begin to form

Melons need to be provided with some form of support and the stems should be tied in as required. Once the main stem reaches 60cm, pinch out the growing tip to encourage side laterals to grow. Select the four strongest laterals then pinch these out once they have produced 3 more leaves to encourage more side breaks. These side breaks should be pinched out after 2 leaves, then allow a further side break to grow and pinch out after 1 leaf.

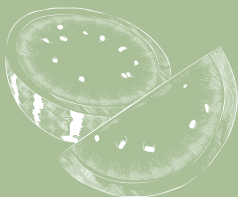
Hand pollination will be required, remove male flowers after they have been used. There are a couple other ways to hand pollinate your cantaloupe plants:

1. You can use an artist paint brush to transfer the pollen, however, this method is time consuming and not as effective.
2. The best way to hand pollinate your cantaloupe plants is by using your hand and plucking a male flower and transferring the pollen to the female flower.

Check your melons regularly as the harvest time draws near. Look at the rind and prepare to pick them when they change from green to tan or yellow. Another indication of ripeness is a crack in the stem where it attaches to the fruit.



Height: to 100cm
Spread: to 100cm
Tender annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 14 days
Harvest:
From 12 weeks



Zinnia

J F M A M J J A S O N D



Zinnia's are mostly annual plants, popular because of the colourful, daisy-like flowers. Native to Mexico, there are 18 species and hundreds of cultivated forms, which are grown as annual bedding plants. Flowers come in vivid colours from red, orange and deep pink to green, with a lovely long flowering season from summer to the first frosts. Zinnias are perfect for filling gaps in the border and also work well in container displays. Long stemmed varieties make great cut flowers and single-flowered varieties are attractive to pollinating insects.

Sow seeds from March and April in individual pots or module trays of moist seed compost and cover seeds with a very fine sprinkling of compost or vermiculite. Place container in a propagator or warm place, and keep at a temperature of between 20-25C. After sowing, do not exclude light as this helps germination. Keep the surface of the compost moist but not waterlogged. When well grown, gradually acclimatise young plants to outdoor conditions for a few weeks before planting out after all risk of frost, 20-30cm apart, taking care not to damage the root system.


Zinnia can also be sown outside in May once the soil has warmed, 3mm deep in drills 30cm apart in well-cultivated soil which has been raked to a fine tilth. When large enough to handle, thin out seedlings to 20cm apart.

Zinnia are best planted in well-drained soil in full sun, but with some shelter from strong winds. The flowers have long stems and are long lasting as a cut flower.



Height: to 75cm
Spread: to 45cm
Half-hardy annual
Full sun
Germination:
10 - 24 days



-  Sow inside
-  Sow outside
-  Plant out
-  Flower

My Gardening Notes

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