

SUTTONS

cut flowers

guide

All you need to know for
success every time



why grow flowers for *cutting*?

Growing your own provides a creative opportunity to grow just what you want, and avoid the uninspiring and garish choices that are often found in the supermarkets, where they may have travelled miles (often globally) to reach the shelves.

You do not have to have a huge garden to grow your own flowers; you could even grow some in the veg patch or along borders. Just check the height of the flowers that you have chosen and grow tall ones at the back and shorter ones near the front of the border. Containers will also provide suitable vessels for growing cut flowers as will small raised beds or you can even grow shorter stemmed flowers on a window ledge.

When deciding what you would like to grow it is important to assess the growing conditions that you are able to provide. Most cut flowers will prefer a sunny spot that is sheltered from the wind, and the soil moist but well drained.

REMEMBER!

Do not water flowers in the heat of the day as it may cause the leaves to scorch and turn brown. The best time for watering is in the evening.

- All tall flowers for cutting need to be staked.
- You will need to feed, water and deadhead regularly.
- Annuals and biennials are easy to grow flowers.
- When picking from plants that will flower again do not cut the flowering stem to the ground. Leave a few side branches, or axillary buds (a bud between the stem and leaf) below your cut. These will grow on and develop into your next flower.
- Grow some foliage plants that will enhance your floral arrangements.
- Hardy annuals are great to grow as most are not fussy about the soil, but prefer a warm sunny spot to grow in. All you need to get them growing is some bare soil, seeds, a spade and a rake!
- Don't forget to pull out any weeds.



Monthly *growing guide*

January – Not a lot that we can see happening in the garden this month, however there are jobs that you can do. It is a good time to walk around the garden for a spot check on any plants that may have been left in the ground. Make sure they are still well anchored in the ground if you want to keep them. Re-firm them by heeling in (just like it says – use the heel of your boot to firm and compact the soil around the base of the plant.) Start getting ideas for your spring planting area and order your seeds for spring sowing.

February – Sow Half Hardy Annuals (HHA) indoors (a propagator is ideal for this, or a sunny frost free windowsill). Prepare your outdoor soil by digging it over so the soil is very fine (no hard clumps of mud) the term used for very fine soil is tilth, and this is perfect preparation for sowing seeds direct into the soil.

March – In most areas you can now sow Hardy Annuals (HA) when all risk of frost has passed. These can be scattered in informal drifts or sow them into drills made by drawing a rake through the soil - this will not be very deep. Cover lightly with soil and water well. Examples: Nigella, Californian Poppies and Marigolds. Seeds of tender annuals can now be sown in a greenhouse or on a warm windowsill out of direct sunlight. Examples: Aster, Antirrhinum and Cleome.

April – Continue to sow seeds of hardy annuals where you want them to grow. The hardy annuals that were previously sown can now be thinned by removing the weaker plants and put on the compost heap – this allows the stronger plants to develop into fine strong flowers.

May – Sow seeds of tender annuals, such as Sunflowers and Cosmos, in the position they are to flower and keep them well watered. Tender perennials that have been growing in an indoor environment can now be hardened off (allowed to get used to the change of climate gradually), by moving them outside on warm sunny days.

June – Sow seeds of hardy biennials in trays in a heated greenhouse. The seedlings can be potted individually and grown on ready for planting out next spring.

Pick Sweet Peas regularly just as the flowers open – this will prevent seed-pods forming and encourages more flowers. Cut the stalks at the base where they join the main stem.

July – Keep plants well watered in dry spells. The best time to water is in the evening allowing the plant to soak up what it needs overnight. Thin biennials sown last month to give a final spacing of about 30cm (12") so that they will grow into sturdy plants.

Things you might want to know...

How to *pick flowers*

What is a Hardy Annual (HA)?

An annual grows from seed and then blooms, sets seed and dies in just one growing season. Calendula and Sunflowers are examples of flowers widely grown as annuals. Annuals need to be re-sown each spring. Many can be sown direct outside. Most annuals bloom continuously from spring through to autumn and are great for new gardeners who are learning what they would like to grow, as they are inexpensive to buy and you can always start again if the colours or textures are wrong for you.

What is a Half Hardy Annual (HHA)?

These plants can be categorized with annuals because they will bloom the first year from seed. They are termed half hardy because although they can handle light frost, they can't survive extremely cold weather. In most areas of the UK, you would need to sow them indoors with a little gentle heat and plant outside in Spring or Summer.

What is a Hardy Biennial (HB)?

A biennial grows foliage during its first year, lives over the winter, and then finally blooms in the second season. Once it has bloomed and set seed, it dies. Foxgloves and Hollyhocks are usually biennial.

What is a Hardy Perennial (HP)?

A perennial flower lives for a number of seasons. It may or may not be mature enough to bloom the first year from seed. (Hint: P is for Permanent and for Perennial). Perennials will need periodic rejuvenation and/or replacement, typically every three to five years. Most perennials bloom for only a short period - a week or two or three - once a year.

What is a Half Hardy Perennial (HHP)?

You may see this term used on Suttons Packets to indicate a perennial plant grown as an annual because it will be killed by winter frosts if not given protection. If you live in a frost free climate, this plant would be perennial for you.

- Do not pick flowers in the heat of the day as they will wilt. Pick last thing at night or first thing in the morning.
- Do not try to arrange your flowers straight away. To increase vase life - cut and plunge straight into a bucket of tepid water and allow them to recover for a few hours or overnight.
- Find a shady spot for them to rest. Do not leave them in direct sun even though they are in water.
- Remove the leaves from the bottom half of the stem as you pick, you do not want any leaves left below water level as these will rot when transferred to the vase. If there are fewer leaves there is less demand on the stem and the flower is less likely to flop.
- When you pick annuals and biennials, don't cut them down to the ground. To encourage more flowers, take out the leading shoot, cutting just above a side branch with a bud. Remember that you can cut the stem as long as you would like but always make sure that you leave buds below the cut.

Tips to help your flowers last longer

Add flower food to the water. You can buy it in sachets to sprinkle in the vase or you can make your own from sugar, bleach and lemon juice or vinegar, this will help prevent the build up of harmful bacteria that can affect the vase life of your flowers.) If you have a vase that is 30cm (1') high - use the proportions as follows: one tablespoon of sugar, one teaspoon of bleach, and one tablespoon of clear malt vinegar or lemon juice.

Flower arranging

There are many ways that you can creatively arrange flowers but for the beginner a favourite vase of beautiful flowers can look stunning. Place the flowers in the vase stem by stem and vary the heights. You will need some tall - which are two or three times the height of your vase and some shorter stems for support. Don't be tempted to overfill the vase as this may make the arrangement look cramped; add foliage such as a favourite grass for an interesting contrast.



Cut flower info chart

Use this chart to plan perfect arrangements

Bring the outdoors indoors!

KEY:

HA: Hardy Annual

HHA: Half Hardy Annual

HB: Hardy Biennial

HP: Hardy Perennial

HHP: Half Hardy Perennial

Type	Name	Sow	Flowers	Comment
HP	Achillea	Jan - Mar	Aug - Oct	Dries easily, lasting bright & pastel shades.
HHA	Ageratum	Feb - Mar	All summer	Compact flowers, good for posie vases.
HP	Alstromeria	May - June	June - Aug next year	Excellent cut flower that has an amazing vase life.
HA	Amaranthus	Mar - May	July - Sept	Great for cutting and drying. Very dramatic blooms.
HP	Anemone	Jan - June	Spring - early Summer	Bright and cheerful, superb cut flower.
HHP	Antirrhinum	Jan - Mar	All Summer	Gives height to any floral display and very pretty.
HP	Aquilegia	Jan - Mar	May - July next year	Cottage garden favourite that will give height to a floral display.
HHA	Aster	Apr - Mar	Late Summer to Autumn	An excellent cut flower with superb vase life.
HHA	Basil (foliage)	Apr - May	Throughout summer	As with most herbs, great for foliage and dries well.
HA	Calendula	Mar - June	May - Aug	Long flowering and good cut flower.
HA	Carthamus	Mid Mar-May	July - Sept	Thornless - makes a great cut flower either fresh or dried.
HP	Catananche	Feb - June	Mid April next year	Good for cutting and drying as an everlasting flower.
HHA	Celosia	Feb - April	Throughout summer	Fiery plumes of flowers.
HP	Christmas Rose	Mar - June	Nov - Dec	Attractive winter flowers with evergreen foliage.
HA	Chrysanthemum	April - July	Aug - Oct	Long lasting filler flowers.
HHA	Cineraria (foliage)	Jan - Mar	Throughout summer	Silvery background for smaller displays and posies.
HA	Clarkia	Mar - May	May - July	Very pretty clusters - easy to grow.
HA/HP	Coreopsis	Feb - Mar	July - Oct	Ideal for mixed borders and cutting.
HA	Cornflower	Mar - May	June - Sept	Cottage garden favourite with long wiry stems.
HHA	Cosmos	Mar - May	Late summer	Great for in borders or as a cut flower.
HHP	Dahlia	Jan - Mid April	July - Sept	Interesting blooms, invaluable for autumn floral arrangements.

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Type	Name	Sow	Flowers	Comment
HP	Delphinium	Mid Jan - Mar	Aug - Sept	Spectacular cut flowers for height and texture.
HHA	Dianthus	Jan - Mar	July - Sept	Fragrant and colourful, good for small posies.
HB	Digitalis (Foxglove)	April - Mid July	June - Mid Aug next year	Sturdy cottage flower gives height to both formal and informal displays.
HA	Emilia	April - May	July - Sept	Fluffy bright flower heads held in clusters on long, slender stems.
HA	Eryngium	March - May	July - Sept	Pineapple - Ideal for cutting and drying.
HHP	Freesia	Mar - June	Nov - Mar	Very fragrant and a popular choice for floral displays.
HP	Gaillardia	May - July	July - Sept	Spectacular daisy like blooms that are great for cutting.
HHP	Gazania	Feb - April	June - Sept	Vibrant flowers that are an attractive focal flower.
HHP	Gerbera	Feb - Mar	June - Aug	Exotic looking daisy-like flowers - long lasting.
HP	Geum	Jan - Feb	June - Oct	Luminous orange and yellow flowers on upright stems.
HA/HHA	Godetia	March - May	July - Sept	Pretty blooms - good filler for informal displays.
HA/HP	Grasses	Mid Mar - May	Mid June - Mid Sept	Lovely textured foliage filler - good dried for winter displays.
HA	Gypsophila	Mar - May	June - Sept	Delicate froths of tiny flowers - a must for floral arrangements.
HA	Helichrysum	March - May	July - Oct	Colourful winter dried flowers, to dry - cut when just open.
HP	Heuchera	April - July	June - Aug next year	Subtly scented blooms that can be cut for indoor decoration.
HP	Hollyhock	April - June	June - Aug	Magnificent Summer flower- dries well for winter colour.
HHA	Kingfisher Daisy	March - May	June - Sept	Pretty chrysanthemum-like flowers - for posies.
HA	Kochia	Mar - April	Summer - Autumn	Stunning foliage, pale green in Summer - copper in Autumn
HA	Larkspur	Mar - May	Throughout Summer	Long splendid stems of flower - useful for height and depth, dries well.
HA	Lavatera	Mid Mar - May	July - Sept	A stunning filler for larger displays.
HP	Lavender	Jan - June	June - Sept	Beautifully scented, good colour and dries well.
HA	Linaria	Mar - May	Throughout Summer	Easy to grow, flowers like little snapdragons in bright colours.
HA	Linum	Mar - April	June - Sept	Pretty filler flowers.
HA	Love-Lies-Bleeding	Mar - May	July - Sept	Stunning tassel like flowers - adding rich texture to larger displays.

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Type	Name	Sow	Flowers	Comment
HP	Lupin	Mid Mar - May	June - Sept next year	Ideal for cutting - gives a cottage garden feel to taller displays.
HA	Malope	Mid Mar - May	July - Sept	Pretty open blooms - useful for smaller posies.
HHA	Marigolds	Feb - Mid May	July - Sept	Great for informal displays - dries well.
HP	Michaelmas Daisy	May - July	June - Oct next year	Cheerful daisies - good for informal summer displays.
HA	Mignonette	Mar - May	July - Sept	Pretty small headed flowers - ideal fillers for smaller displays.
HHA	Moluccella	Feb - Mar	May - June	Green graceful stems - excellent for all displays.
HA	Nasturtium	Mar - May	Mid June - Sept	A riot of colour - great for informal small displays and posies.
HHA	Nicotiana	Mid Mar - May	Mid June - Sept	Fragrant and charming, good for informal arrangements.
HA	Nigella	Mid Mar - May	July - Sept	Delicate flowers - lovely for informal displays - pods and flowers dry well.
HHP	Penstemon	Feb - Mar	May - Sept	Pretty summer spires that add substance to larger displays.
HHA	Phlox	Feb - April	June - Sept	Dainty heads of flowers - lovely in summer informal displays.
HA	Poppy	Jan - Mar	June - Oct	Not long lasting however blooms make beautiful focal flowers - pods dry well for winter decoration.
HP	Pyrethrum	May - July	May - June next year	Lovely long stemmed daisy flowers - ideal for informal fillers.
HHA/HP	Rudbeckia	Feb - Mid April	July - Sept	Superb daisy like flowers - great long lasting focal flowers.
HHA	Salvia	Jan - Mar	July - Sept	Wonderful filler flowers that provide shape and texture.
HP	Scabious	Mid Mar - May	July - Sept	A superb traditional flower that will add grace to any display.
HHA	Statice	Feb - April	July - Sept	One of the best plants for cut/dried flowers.
HHA	Stock	Feb - April	June - Sept	Fragrant classic flower - stunning in formal and informal displays
HA	Sunflower	Mar - May	July - Sept	Easy to grow - a must for flower arranging - dries well.
HHA/HA	Swan River Daisy	Mar - May	June- Sept	Easy to grow - fragrant , lavender blue flowers.
HA	Sweet Pea	Jan - May	June - Sept	Popular cottage garden flowers. Look stunning in a floral arrangement.
HB	Sweet William	May - July	June - July next year	Scented cottage garden flower - classic focal flower.
HB	Wallflower	May - Mid July	April - May next year	Cheerful scented flowers - lovely in informal displays.
HA	Zinnia	Mar - May	July - Sept	Stunning blooms. Provide excellent focal interest and texture. Dry well.

jobs to do for the rest of the year

Summer

Deadhead flowers – this will encourage more to grow.

Cut stems with freshly opened flowers and lots of buds as these are ideal to use for an indoor display.

Keep container grown plants watered regularly.

Autumn

Some hardy annuals can be sown for flowering mid – March onwards. Autumn sown seeds will form small plants before winter when growth will slow down due to winter conditions; however they will spurt into action in spring and will look superb.

Winter

This is the time of year when you can tidy up the flower bed, put any jaded looking plants on to the compost heap and look forward to the spring.

The Suttons catalogue will be available and is full of fabulous seeds and ideas for your cutting garden.

Spring

The time of year when the soil needs to be prepared for its first sowings. Dig in some compost to improve your soil.

Don't sow when the soil is damp and cold – the seeds won't like it, will be less likely to survive and may well rot or get eaten by birds.

Sow as thinly as you can but try to space them as near to 5cm (2") apart, and no more than 1-2cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ ") deep.

Thin out when the seedlings are about 2.5cm (1") tall and have at least two pairs of leaves. Leave one good plant about every 10cm (4") and put the thinnings on the compost heap.

Thin again following the instructions on the seed packet and give them plenty of room to grow e.g. average sized hardy annuals should be 25-30cm (10-12") apart, and larger ones 45-50cm (18-20"). This will ensure that the plants absorb all the nutrients that they need and will therefore produce more flowers and live longer.