

CALENDULA

CALENDULA OFFICINALIS



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CULTURAL & HISTORICAL NOTES ...

Native to the Mediterranean, calendula has been cultivated globally for its ornamental beauty and practical uses. Historically, it has been utilized in culinary applications, adding color and a mildly peppery flavor to dishes. In traditional medicine, calendula was employed to treat various ailments, including skin conditions and digestive issues. Its vibrant petals have also been used as a natural dye for fabrics and cosmetics, producing shades of honey, gold, orange, light brown, and vibrant yellow. Ancient cultures, including the Greeks, Romans, Middle Eastern, and Indian societies, valued calendula for its medicinal properties and as a dye source. In India, calendula flowers are sacred and have been used to decorate Hindu deities' statues since early times. The plant's nickname, "Mary's Gold," refers to its use in early Christian events in some countries. In English cuisine, calendula petals were historically used to color and flavor dishes such as dumplings, wine, oatmeal, and puddings. The plant was also used in broths and soups, leading to its common name in Britain, 'pot-marigold.' Additionally, calendula flowers have been used to make an oil widely utilized in skin products. The flowers are a rich source of lutein, containing 29.8 mg/100g, which is beneficial for eye health. Plant extracts are also widely used in cosmetics, presumably due to the presence of compounds such as saponins, resins, and essential oils. In summary, calendula's vibrant petals have been cherished for their culinary, medicinal, and dyeing applications across various cultures throughout history.

Note: While calendula is generally safe for topical use, some individuals may experience allergic reactions. Perform a patch test before extensive use. Consult a healthcare professional before using calendula medicinally, especially if pregnant, nursing, or taking medications.

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PARTS USED
Flower petals,
fresh or dried

USDA ZONES
2-11

GERMINATION
10-15 days

HARVEST
50-60 days

LIGHT
Full sun -
partial shade

SOIL
Well-drained, moderately
rich soil; tolerates poor
conditions but thrives in
fertile, well-drained soils

WATERING
Regular watering
to keep soil evenly
moist; reduce
frequency once
established



HOW TO GROW...

Sowing: Direct sow seeds in early spring once the soil temperature reaches 60°F (16°C) and the danger of heavy frost has passed. Sow seeds ¼ inch deep, thinly covering them with soil. For continuous blooms, sow seeds every two to three weeks until early summer. In regions with mild winters, fall sowing is possible, though excessive moisture may cause seeds to rot.

Transplanting: Sow seeds indoors 4–6 weeks before the last frost, then transplant seedlings outdoors when temperatures consistently reach 50°F (10°C), spacing them 8–12 inches apart. Alternatively, direct sow seeds in early spring once soil temperatures reach 60°F (16°C) and the risk of heavy frost has passed. Regularly deadhead spent flowers to encourage continuous blooming..

Maintenance: Deadhead spent blooms regularly to encourage continuous flowering and prevent self-seeding. Calendula can tolerate poor soils but thrives with the addition of compost or well-rotted manure. Avoid over-fertilizing, as excessive nitrogen can lead to lush foliage with fewer flowers.

Pest and Disease Management: While generally resilient, calendula can be susceptible to powdery mildew, especially in humid conditions. Ensure proper spacing and air circulation to minimize this risk. Aphids and slugs may also pose occasional problems; monitor plants regularly and employ organic control methods as needed.

Note: Calendula has been esteemed for centuries for its medicinal properties. The petals contain anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial compounds, making them valuable in treating minor cuts, burns, and skin irritations. Infused oils, salves, and teas are common applications. Always consult with a healthcare professional before using calendula medicinally, especially during pregnancy or when nursing.

DYE TECHNIQUE TO TRY ...

Use fresh or dried petals to create dye baths. Gently simmer (do not boil) petals in water to extract the dye, then strain. Pre-mordant natural fibers with alum to enhance color absorption. Submerge the fabric in the dye bath at 180°F (82°C) for one hour, stirring occasionally. Allow the fabric to cool in the dye bath before rinsing and drying.

