

How to Grow European Columbine



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The columbine plant (*Aquilegia*) is an easy-to-grow perennial that offers seasonal interest throughout much of the year. It blooms in a variety of colors during spring, which emerge from its attractive dark green foliage that turns maroon colored in fall. The bell-shaped flowers are also a favorite to hummingbirds and may be used in cut-flower arrangements as well.



How to Grow Columbines

While Columbines enjoy full sun in most areas, they don't like it very hot, especially during summer. Therefore, in warmer areas like the South, grow them in partial shade and give them plenty of mulch to help keep the soil moist. Mulch will also help insulate and protect these plants during winter in other regions.



Columbine Planting Tips

Columbines start easily from seed and will readily multiply once established. Columbine flower seeds can be directly sown in the garden anytime between early spring and mid-summer. There's no need to even cover them as long as they receive plenty of light.

The ideal soil type should be humus rich, well drained and with a pH of 5.5 to 7.0. Spacing for both seeds and plants should be anywhere from one to two feet. **Note:** Blooms will not appear on seed-grown plants until their second year.



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How to Care for Columbine Plant

Keep the plants moist following columbine planting until well established. Then only weekly watering is necessary with exception to extended periods of drought in which they will require additional watering.

Provide a water soluble fertilizer monthly. Regular fertilizing will help produce brighter blooms and thicker foliage.

Regular deadheading can also be performed to encourage additional blooming. If their self-seeding becomes an issue, both the foliage and remaining seedpods can be cut back in the fall. While some people prefer not to allow them to self-sow, it is often recommended, as columbine plants are generally short lived, with an average lifespan of about three or four years. If desired, these plants can also be divided every few years.

Although columbine doesn't suffer from too many problems, leaf miners can become an issue on occasion. Treating plants with neem oil is a good way to control these pests. Pruning columbine plants back to the basal foliage just after blooming can usually help alleviate any problems with insect pests as well. You may even be lucky enough to get a second set of stem growth within a few weeks so that you may enjoy another wave of blooms.

