

How to Grow Perennial Gaillardia



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Gaillardias are a North American native wildflower. Bright reds, oranges and yellows are characteristic colors of gaillardia (*Gaillardia* spp.) plants. These drought-tolerant flowers come in both annual and perennial varieties. Hardy in U.S. Department of Agriculture plant hardiness zones 3 through 11, gaillardia thrives in full sun and a range of soil types. The brown center of the gaillardia flower changes to a seed head after pollination. Seeds grow readily with the proper planting and care. Sow gaillardia seeds six to eight weeks before the last average frost date in your area.



Instructions

1. Mix 1 part fine sphagnum peat moss and 1 part vermiculite in a bucket. Add water slowly to moisten the media. Add only enough water to ensure the medium it is evenly moist but not soggy.

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2. Fill a 3 1/2-inch pot with the medium, tamping it down gently. Add more soil so the medium's surface is 1 inch below the top of the pot.
3. Sow three seeds in the center of the pot, placing them on top of the medium. Do not cover the seeds. Attach a misting nozzle to a garden hose or use a spray bottle to mist over the top of the seeds.





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4. Place the pot in a room with a constant temperature of 60 to 65 degrees Fahrenheit. Position the pot in direct sunlight, near a window that receives eight hours of light per day. Do not place the pot near heating or cooling vents.
5. Check the soil once or twice each day for moisture loss. Water the pot to a depth of 1/2 inch when the surface of the soil becomes dry. Apply the water slowly to the pot to avoid washing the seeds from the pot's center or burying them under the soil.
6. Check the pot two to three weeks after sowing for signs of germination. Examine the seedlings when they develop their first set of true leaves, noting the strongest of the three. Pull the two weakest seedlings out of the pot carefully to avoid disturbing the roots of the remaining seedling.
7. Water the seedling when the top 1 inch of soil becomes dry. Test the soil's moisture content by pushing your finger down into it near the edge of the pot. Apply the water directly to the pot in the morning.
8. Fertilize the seedling every 10 to 14 days with a 10-10-10 nitrogen, phosphorous, potassium water-soluble fertilizer. Mix 1/2 teaspoon fertilizer with 1 gallon water. Apply the fertilizer in place of a watering.
9. Transplant the gaillardia start outdoors after the last frost date, once soil temperatures reach 65 F. Choose a location in full sun that contains fertile, fast-draining soil. Dig a hole equal in depth and twice as wide as the gaillardia's root ball with a trowel. Space the hole 12 to 15 inches away from nearby plants. Slide the root ball from its pot. Massage the bottom of the root ball, spreading the roots outward. Place the plant in the center of the hole. Backfill the hole with soil, tamping it down gently around the root ball. Do not plant the gaillardia deeper than it was previously growing. Water the area thoroughly.