

# How to Grow Snapdragons



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## Snapdragons

The Latin name, *Antirrhinum*, means “like a snout” and refers to the seed pod’s resemblance to a calf’s nose. How do such charming flowers wind up with such ungracious names?

## Description:

Snapdragons are bushy plants with tall spikes of flower buds. Most are intensely colored and real standouts in the garden.



## Leaves:

The alternate, lanceolate leaves are arranged in a spiral around the stem.

## Flowers:

The flowers come in just about every shade, except true blue. Some are vibrant bold tones, some are soft pastels and some are subtly shaded bi-colors. Caution: All parts of snapdragon are poisonous, if ingested.



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### Latin Name:

*Antirrhinum majus*

### Common Name:

Snapdragon, Dog's/ Lion's/Toad's Mouth

### Hardiness Zones:

Snapdragons are tender perennials that are only hardy to about USDA Hardiness Zones 8 or 9. In most areas they are commonly grown as annuals. Even when they do over-winter, they never seem to bloom as robustly as they did in their first year, which leads many people to think they are biennial, but they should form seed pods in their first year. If you're lucky, they may even self-sow.

### Exposure:

They will bloom most profusely in full sun to partial shade, in the spring. Once the temperature heat up, they may stop blooming altogether. Planting them in partial shade and keeping them well watered will help them make it through the summer, to begin blooming again in fall. However they are quick to get established and it can be just as easy to replace your snapdragon plants each season.



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## Mature Size:

There are tall varieties and dwarf varieties and just about everything in between. Check the label or packet of the variety you are choosing.

Dwarf plants mature at a height of about 6 - 15 in. and form dense, bushy plants with lots of flower stalks.

Tall varieties tend to be less bushy in habit, reaching a height of 30 - 48 in.

Some varieties bridge the two extremes, growing to a mid-sized 15-30 in. Of course, the actual size and fullness of the plants will also depend on growing conditions.

## Bloom Period:

Snapdragons are at their best in cool weather. They can repeat bloom throughout the season, but do best in the cool of spring and fall and throughout the winter, in mild climates. Deadheading can increase the amount of buds that are set, but since the flower stalks begin blooming from the bottom up, they have a fairly long bloom duration anyway.





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## Growing Tips:

**Soil:** Snapdragons like a neutral soil pH, between 6.2 and 7.0. As short-lived plants, they are not heavy feeders, but adding organic matter will help keep them healthy and blooming.

## Planting:

Snapdragons can be winter sown, meaning you can toss the seeds out in late fall or even on top of snow, and most will germinate in the spring.

However snapdragons are most often either started indoors, 8 - 10 weeks before the last frost date, grown from cuttings or purchased as seedlings. When starting from seed, simply press the seed on the surface of the potting soil. Snapdragon seeds need light to germinate.

When seedlings have developed about 6 true leaves, pinch the top of the stem off, to encourage branching and a fuller plant. You can do this with purchased seedlings too.

Transplant snapdragons outdoors a couple of weeks before your last frost date. Snapdragons can handle a light frost or two.





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## Maintenance:

Regular deadheading will keep your snapdragons blooming longer. They won't need much care early in spring, but mulching to keep the soil cool and moist can help them handle summer better.

Snapdragons are tender perennials and may die off in colder climates. If they do survive the winter, prune them back by about 1/3, to encourage new growth. Don't be too disappointed if they don't last long. Snapdragons tend to go downhill after their first year and it's best to start fresh every year. Many varieties will self-seed and come back on their own, although they won't always look like the original plants you planted.

Some of the taller varieties will need staking.

## Pests & Problems:

Snapdragons are affected by few pests or diseases. Rust and other fungal diseases can be a problem, especially in wet seasons. If you live in a damp or humid area, look for resistant varieties. Snapdragons may also attract aphids .

