

How to Grow Nasturtium Plants



How would you characterize Nasturtium? Is it a flower or a vegetable? Actually, it's both. By far the majority of home gardeners consider it to be a flower. But to other gardeners, they grow Nasturtium for the edible leaves, flowers and seeds. Related to the cress family, Nasturtiums have a slightly pepper taste. Nasturtium is also well known for its use as a companion plant with other vegetables. It wards off certain insects. Nasturtium is an easy to grow annual, native to areas from the southern area of South America up to Mexico. The majority of popular varieties are bush type plants, growing up to 12 inches. There are some less known vining varieties. Bright, fragrant flowers sit atop long stems. Colors include yellow, orange, pink, red, scarlet, and mahogany.



Propagation: Nasturtiums are grown from seed. Plants are fast growing, and can be directly seed into your garden after all danger of frost. Seedlings will sprout in approximately 7 to 8 days. Sow Nasturtium seeds 1/2 inch deep, and 10 to 12 inches apart.



How to Grow Nasturtium Plants: Nasturtium plants prefer full sun. They grow well in average to poor soils. And, they prefer the soil on the dry side. We suggest you select a spot in your garden where little else will grow. Established plants require very little, if any, attention. For optimum growth, add fertilizer in mid season. Keep the soil on the dry side. Chances are, you will not need to water these drought tolerant plants during the season. The flowers make for good color in the garden. They will bloom in as little as 35 to 40 days after they sprout. Blooms will continue all season long right up to frost. Deadhead blooms to promote new flowers, and to maintain an attractive appearance. Nasturtiums are susceptible to frost. If they are still blooming when fall arrives, cover them on cold nights.



Harvesting: Harvest leaves as soon as several leaves are on the plant. Tender young leaves taste better than older leaves. The flowers are also edible, but have less taste. Try using the seeds in pickling for a somewhat different taste.



Insect and Disease: While Nasturtium is known to chase away some insects, others are attracted to it. Aphids can be a problem. Mold and fungus disease can occur in hot, humid weather. Apply insecticides or fungicides only as needed. If you are growing Nasturtium as a vegetable, you may want to avoid using insecticide and fungicides.