

MOLES SEEDS

Cut Flowers from Seed

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ131

Introduction

There has been an increase in the popularity of UK-grown cut flowers in recent years. Customers who wonder about 'food miles' for their vegetables etc, are now thinking about the energy required to produce and ship cut flowers around the world, and are becoming used once again to farm gate and farm shop purchases.

Although the varieties listed below tend to be seasonal, with careful planning it is possible to produce an interesting range of fresh flowers outdoors over several months from late Spring to Autumn, especially with the addition of bulb crops such as tulips and daffodils, and using polytunnels.

In many respects it is a question of trial and error with these flowers in terms of what will grow in your conditions and what will suit your market, but in general the seed is inexpensive, allowing a good range to be grown on a test basis, whilst experience is gained.

Planning

When planning a cut flower programme, make sure before you start that you have a potential market for the produce, that labour will be available to harvest what will be a concentrated crop in the summer months, thought is given to water supply, weed and pest and disease control, and facilities are available to deal with the crop once harvested, in terms of cooling, and drying where required. Plate Seeders (such as the Earthway Seeder, sold online) are useful to sow short runs of seeds (both flower and vegetable) into drills.

A useful book on the small-scale cut flower production (based on American experience), is Lynn Byczynski's 'The Flower Farmer'. Most cut flower books err on the side of pretty pictures of arrangements, whereas this one (based on organic principles so little in the way of pesticide or herbicide information) is more practical.

For further details, cultural information pictures, prices etc, please see the Moles Seeds catalogue, or go online at www.molesseeds.co.uk.

Direct-sowing hardy annuals

Sow in rows April-June (space the rows according to the final height of the crop (see catalogue for approx heights), or items marked * can also be sown Aug-Sept. Growers in the South West are around one month ahead of Northern Britain in terms of last frost date – this should be taken into account in planning.

It is also possible to sow the seed into cell trays first and plant out young plants – adds cost, but weed control is easier. Seed rate in the row (grams per metre) – easiest way is to pace out a row length which matches the amount of seeds in the packet (eg *Acroclinium* one of our 5g packets will do a row 10 metres long, at half a gram of seed per metre) – this is only an approximate rate and can be varied. Once germinated, ideally thin the plants out in the row to allow each to develop properly.

Key

F = use fresh, *D* = use dried

* = can be sown August/September as well

Acroclinium	(F/D) <i>Grandiflorum</i> (<i>Helipterum roseum</i>). Direct sow at 0.5g per metre of row.
Agrostemma	(F) <i>Githago</i> (Corn Cockle). Direct sow at 0.5g per metre of row.
Amaranthus	(F/D) <i>Green Thumb</i> , <i>Pygmy Torch</i> , <i>Love Lies Bleeding</i> and <i>Hot Biscuits</i> . Direct sow at 0.25g per metre of row, or sow into modules and transplant.
Ammi Majus	(F) <i>Graceland</i> . Direct sow at 100 seeds per metre. Tall (to 140cm).
Ammobium	(F/D) <i>Grandiflorum</i> . Sow into modules and plant out in May/June, or direct sow late May-June at 200 seeds per metre.
Anethum	(F/D) <i>Mariska</i> (<i>Florist's Dill</i>). Direct sow at 1g per metre.
Bells of Ireland	See <i>Molucella</i> .
Bupleurum	(F) <i>Griffithii</i> – essential bouquet filler, yellow-green flowers. Direct sow at 0.5g/metre.
Calendula*	(F) <i>Balls Improved Orange</i> . Direct sow at 1g/metre.
Candytuft	(F) <i>Iceberg Superior</i> – direct sow at 250sds per metre.
Centaurea Cyanus	(F/D) <i>Cornflower</i> . Tall types. Direct sow at 0.3g/metre.
Clary	See <i>Salvia hormineum</i> .
Daucus	(F) <i>Dara</i> . Direct sow at 0.25g per metre.
Delphinium Condolida*	See <i>Larkspur</i> .
Didiscus	(F) <i>Madonna Mixed</i> . Direct sow at 250 seeds/metre.
Cosmos	(F) Tall types make short-lived bouquet fillers. Sow into modules and plant out in May/June, or direct sow late May-June at 1g per metre.
Grass	See also <i>annual grass section</i> . Sow thinly in rows from April onwards – the higher priced varieties can be sown into modules then planted out.



Gypsophila	(F) Elegans, white and pink types. Direct sow at 0.25g per metre.	Carthamus	(F/D) Nemo (Orange) is most popular also Shiro (yellow). Spacing 30cm. Germination temperature max 20°C, sow thinly, keep moist.
Helichrysum	(F/D) <i>Bracteatum</i> . King Sized and Pastel types. Direct sow at 0.2g per metre.	Celosia	(F/D) Spicata Flamingo Feather and Plumosa Century. Spacing 30cm.
Helianthus	<i>See Sunflower.</i>	Cleome	(F/D) Big and spiky but good for larger arrangements. Spacing 40cm.
Larkspur*	(F/D) <i>Delphinium consolida</i> . A range of colours and types. Direct sow at 0.3g per metre.	Craspedia Globosa	(F) Drumstick. Spacing 30cm.
Lavatera	(F) Beauty Mixed. Grow in modules and transplant at around 30cm spacing once frost danger is over.	Dahlia	(F) Tall types. Spacing 30cm.
Limonium	<i>See Statice.</i>	Dianthus	(F) Dignity Series. Spacing 30cm.
Molucella	(F/D) <i>Bells of Ireland</i> . Direct sow at 200 seeds per metre in May and June.	Dianthus Barbatus	(F) <i>Sweet William</i> . Annual types Hollandia, Bodestoltz, Sweet (pelleted seed). Spacing 30cm. <i>See also 'standard' overwintering types below.</i>
Nigella*	(F/D) <i>Love in a mist</i> . Various. Direct sow at 0.5g per metre.	Euphorbia	(F) Marginata. Foliage line. Spacing 30cm.
Salvia Hormineum	(F/D) Clary. Marble Arch. Direct sow at 0.5g per metre.	Godetia	(F) Dwarf Satin F1. Spacing 30cm.
Scabiosa	(F/D) Dwarf Double and Stellata Ping Pong. Dwarf Double: either modules or direct sow at 1g per metre. Stellata: sow into modules and plant out in May/June.	Gomphrena	(F/D) Sunburst Mixed. Spacing 20cm.
Sunflower	(F) <i>Helianthus</i> . Sow in modules successionaly from mid April and plant out at 10cm spacing to produce relatively small flowers on single stems. The more space, the bigger and more unwieldy the flowers and thicker the stem. We offer a range of Pollen-free F1 types for best results. For large-scale production, direct-sow outdoors from mid May, as early as mid March under fleece.	Gourd (Ornamental)	(F/D) Used in winter arrangements. Spacing – best left to ramble in a corner of the field, but approx 1m.
Zinnia	(F) Various - Dahlia Flowered, State Fair, Oklahoma, Benary's Giant. Direct sow at 1g per metre after last frost date.	Lobelia	(F) Fan and Compliment Series. Requires early sowing (January ideally). Spacing 30cm.

Half-hardy annuals and tender perennials treated as annuals

These are grown for one season only. Frost-tender, they can't be planted outside until all danger of frost is past (mid-May in the mildest areas, June further north). So raise in modules from a March-April sowing. Ideally support with Chrysanthemum netting to prevent stem collapse.

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Ageratum	(F) Blue Horizon. Spacing 30cm.
Agastache	(F) Liquorice Blue and White. Scented foliage also. Spacing 30cm.
Amaranthus	<i>See direct-sown section above.</i> Spacing 25cm.
Ammobium	(F/D) Grandiflorum. <i>See direct-sown section above.</i> Spacing 25cm.
Antirrhinum	(F) Rocket and Madame Butterfly. Spacing 30cm.
Asclepias	(F) Silky Series. Produces milky sap when cut – try dipping the ends of the stems in hot water once cut for a short while – spacing 30cm.
Aster	(F) <i>Callistephus</i> . Various - see catalogue for detailed instructions. Spacing 25cm.
Carnation	(F) Floristan. Start early in year – takes a long time to flower. Spacing 25cm.

Perennials

Sow May-July into modules, pot up, plant out at around 30cm centres when established in the pot either in Autumn or the following early Spring. Ideally support with Chrysanthemum netting to prevent stem collapse.

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Achillea	(F/D) All the tall types.
Agapanthus	(F) Takes 2-3 years from seed to become large enough to flower.
Alchemilla mollis	(F) Important green flowered filler.
Anaphalis	(D) New Snow.
Aquilegia	(F) Taller types. Spring flowering.
Armeria	(F/D) Large-flowered hybrids.
Astrantia	(F) Primadonna.
Buphthalmum	(F) Sunwheel.
Campanula	(F) Persicifolia and pramidalis.
Carnation	(F) Iron Stem Hardy Border Mixed.
Centaurea	(F/D) Macrocephala.
Delphinium	(F) Pacific Giants (tall), Magic Fountains (Shorter) and Belladonna Hybrids (more open flowers).
Echinacea	<i>See Rudbeckia.</i>
Echinops	(F/D) Ritro.
Eryngium	(F/D) All except Blue Hobbit.

Eucalyptus	(F) Gunnii. Foliage item.
Geum	(F) Various types.
Gypsophila	(F) Paniculata Single White.
Helenium	(F) Helena Autumnale.
Jasione	(F) Perennis Blue Light.
Lavender	(F) Various types and colours.
Liatris	(F/D) Spicata
Lupin	(F) Gallery (short) and Russell (taller).
Monarda	(F) Various types.
Perovskia	(F) Taiga
Platycodon	(F) <i>Balloon Flower</i> . Marginal in UK outdoors.
Pyrethrum	(F) Tanacetum Coccineum Robinsons types.
Rudbekia	(F) <i>Echinacea</i> . Purpurea and Occidentalis Green Wizard.
Scabiosa	(F/D) Various taller, perennial types.
Statice	(D) <i>Limonium</i> . Dumosa.
Verbena	(F) Bonariensis.
Veronia	(F) Spicata types.

Biennial

Sweet William	<i>Dianthus Barbatus</i> . Standard types are direct-sown in June outdoors (at around 3kg per acre) for flowering the following May-June. <i>See also annual types above.</i>
Brompton Stock	<i>Matthiola</i> . Lady and East Lothian Stock Legacy – sow into modules in June and plant out at 20cm spacing for flowering the following May-June, or can be sown Jan-Feb for annual production.
Honesty	<i>Lunaria annua</i> . Direct sow June at 2g per metre for overwintering – the seed pods which appear in the summer of the following year are used in dried arrangements.

Vegetables and Herbs

It is possible also to use flowering stems of herbs such as Dill, Fennel, Rosemary, Mint and Lemon Balm in floral arrangements, and even flowers of bolted parsnips and allium (leek, onion, chives etc).

Specialist Cut Flower Crops

Anemone	(F) Mona Lisa. Specialist glasshouse crop. Ask for detailed instructions.
Asparagus 'Fern'	Grown in the greenhouse to provide foliage year round, e.g. for 'buttonhole' arrangements with carnations.
Canterbury Bells	(F) Champion. Specialist glasshouse crop. Ask for detailed instructions.
Stocks	<i>Matthiola</i> . Lucinda Series. For sowing May-Sept. Selection of double-flowered types is required – see catalogue for details.
Ornamental Brassica	Crane. Best sown May-July for Autumn-Winter bouquets – use netting to support stems.
Sweet Pea	Easy enough to grow but not to grow well – they need a lot of work in terms of training and harvesting, and the vase life is short.

Disclaimer: Weather plays a major part when growing cut flowers outdoors in the UK: poly tunnels can protect the crop and advance the harvesting time by several weeks, but the information is provided as a general guide only, as cultural practises, soil, climate and weather all play a major part in affecting the outcome.

(12/15)