



# Top Tips - Flower Seed Sowing Schedule for Spring

Month	Activity	Comments
January	<p>Early in the month decide on the plants you would like to grow and order your seeds. Some garden centres and shops have seeds to buy, but you'll get a far better selection if you buy from catalogues or websites. <i>See below for recommended suppliers.</i></p> <p>Start sowing <b>Hardy annual</b> seeds undercover in the last half of January – you'll be rewarded with earlier flowers if you sow your Sweet Peas, Calendula, Borage, Nigella and Cornflower etc. now. (See Top Tips on <a href="#">Indoor Seed Sowing</a>)</p>	<p>Select a range of flowers that will provide flowers in your garden over a long period from early spring to autumn or winter.</p> <p>For annual plants (that only live for one season) choose a range of <b>hardy</b> (can survive winter) and <b>half-hardy</b> (will die if frosted) plants. Check the seed pack, website or catalogue to find out which category the plants are in. (Also see Top Tips on <a href="#">Annual Flowers</a>.)</p> <p>All these seeds will thrive in a cold greenhouse or cool and sunny windowsill. However, they will grow slowly so don't overwater them, just keep the compost moist. Sweet peas should be planted in fives in large pots (15cm diameter and 20cm depth) to give them space for good root development.</p>
February	<p>Leave your Sweet pea seedlings in their pot, but for the other plants you can start to 'prick out' seedlings into their own small pots (of 6cm diameter or small 'yogurt pot' sized) when they have at least two pairs of leaves. Keep the seedlings under cover and moist. (For more information on 'pricking out' see Top Tips on <a href="#">Annual Flowers</a>.)</p> <p>Sow <b>Hardy perennials</b> under cover in a cold greenhouse or cool, sunny windowsill; try Viola, Pansy, Geranium, Verbena, Achillea, Angelica gigas etc.</p>	<p>If your seedlings are on a windowsill make sure you turn them regularly so your plants don't lean over to find the sun. Check the seed packet to see what temperature is needed for germination – some plants need a higher temperature for a few weeks to encourage growth, but this can be reduced once the seedlings have developed (but never let your seedlings freeze).</p> <p>You can use an electric propagator to provide more heat or put a plastic cover/bag over the seed pots/trays and put them by a radiator. (Also see Top Tips <a href="#">Growing Under Cover</a>.) Regularly remove any condensation that builds up on the propagator cover/plastic bag or it will allow fungus to thrive and infect your seedlings.</p>

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<b>March</b>	<p>You can start sowing your <b>Half-Hardy</b> seeds under cover this month. Popular varieties include Nasturtiums, Lobelia, Nicotiana sylvestris, Cosmos, Ammi majus. You may need to provide extra heat if you are growing these in an unheated greenhouse (see above).</p> <p>Continue to 'prick out' any seedlings with more than two pairs of leaves into their own individual small pots.</p>	<p>Make sure you do not overwater seedlings; a good method is to water from the bottom by standing seed trays or pots in a large tray, which is then filled with 1cm of water. The compost will draw up the water it needs to keep moist, and you just top up the water in the tray when it has been used.</p> <p>If you see any green film forming in the water immediately drain and clean the tray. Leave the pots a few days to drain and then start to water again using small amounts of water each time.</p> <p>Remember if the weather is cold and the seedlings are small they will only be taking up very small amounts of water.</p>
<b>April</b>	<p>This month you can sow <b>Half Hardy</b> plants that will flower in the late summer/autumn and give you colour up to the first frosts such as Rudbeckia, Cerinthe 'Major Purpurascens', Dahlia, Petunia, Amaranthus, Thunbergia etc.</p> <p>You can now start to plant out your <b>Hardy</b> small plants outside into the garden or large containers outside. The ideal time is when there is no frost (or expected frost) and the plants have filled their small pots. Add some fertiliser and water the plants in well – protect from slugs, if necessary.</p>	<p>You will know when your <b>Hardy</b> plants are ready to be planted on as their roots will have started to come through the holes in the bottom of the pot.</p> <p>By planting out your <b>Hardy</b> Plants you will make more space for your smaller and less hardy seedlings inside.</p> <p>Plant out your Sweet Peas by keeping your plants together in their fives – sink the surface of the pot compost 3 – 5cm below the surface of the ground soil. Fertilise, water and put in plant supports 1.5 – 1.8m tall that they can climb up and remember to protect from the seedlings from slugs.</p>

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May	<p>Continue to 'prick out' any seedlings that have at least two pairs of leaves.</p> <p>You can also plant out your <b>Half Hardy</b> plants at the end of May if they have filled out their small pots with roots.</p> <p>May is a good month to sow seeds directly into the soil or pots outside. As the soil has warmed up the seeds should germinate quite quickly. Any <b>Hardy</b> or <b>Half Hardy</b> plants can be sown outside this month.</p>	<p>Keep the compost moist at all times; check your seedlings everyday as the daytime temperature increases.</p> <p>If you have space and time you could 'harden off' your <b>Half-Hardy</b> plants before you plant them outside. To do this you put them outside during the day but cover them out at night. The easiest way to do this is put them in a cold frame and keep the lid open in the day and closed at night. If you don't have a cold frame you can physically move the pots in and out of the greenhouse/house. (Also see <a href="#">Growing Under Cover.</a>)</p> <p>If you harden off the plants for 7 – 10 days before planting out you will find that there will not be a pause in growth while the indoor-grown plants acclimatise to the outdoor environment.</p>
June	Sow seeds of <b>Biennial</b> plants (Foxgloves, Sweet William, Teasel, Honesty) for flowers next year.	As the length of the days reach their peak and the temperature increases make sure that you are keeping the compost moist at all times as seedlings are vulnerable to drying out quickly.

## SUPPLIERS

<b>Sarah Raven</b> <a href="https://www.sarahraven.com/veg_fruit/seeds">https://www.sarahraven.com/veg_fruit/seeds</a>	Selection of familiar and unusual flowers and vegetables. Her speciality is flowers grown for use in flower arrangements.
<b>Higgledy Garden</b> <a href="http://higgledygarden.com/">http://higgledygarden.com/</a>	Seed specialist in Cornwall with lots of tips and ideas on the website.
<b>Landlife</b> <a href="http://www.wildflower.org.uk/">http://www.wildflower.org.uk/</a>	Wildflower seed specialist in Liverpool. Due to lack of funding this business is due to close after February 2017, so order your seeds asap!
<b>Thompson and Morgan</b> <a href="http://www.thompson-morgan.com/">http://www.thompson-morgan.com/</a>	Large seed supplier of flower and vegetable seeds.
<b>Chiltern Seeds</b> <a href="http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/">http://www.chilternseeds.co.uk/</a>	Smaller supplier of seeds for familiar and unusual plants. I've had some great scented Sweet Peas from this supplier.
<b>Plant World Seeds</b> <a href="http://www.plant-world-seeds.com/">http://www.plant-world-seeds.com/</a>	Unusual varieties of flower and vegetable seeds.