



Annual Flower Planting Dates

Cook County USDA Hardiness Zone 5b or 6a

Annual flowers tend to bloom for long periods. They die at the end of one growing season. Sowing your seed gives you more choices than plants from retail markets alone. This table can help you plan your seed sowing. Sow seed indoors on or near the **In date**, move plants to the garden on or after the **Out date**. Sow seed directly in the garden on **In Garden** dates. Check seed packets and other references for more detailed information. **L** means light is needed to germinate. **D** means drought tolerant after the plants become well established in the garden.

Cook County has an average of 170 frost-free days generally between May 15 and October 1. However, frost can occur at any time. The average last spring frost is April 30 (up to 5 days earlier close to Lake Michigan). The average first freeze will occur on or after October 15 (up to 5 days later close to Lake Michigan). Check weather forecasts and adjust planting dates to predicted last frosts. Harden off plants before setting them in the garden.

HARDY FLOWERS* can tolerate light frosts after hardening off without being killed or badly damaged.

Alyssum (Sweet)-D	In Mar 15 L / Out May 15 or In Garden Apr 30	Flowering Kale -D	In Jul 1/ Out Sept 1
Calendula -D	In Apr 1-Apr 15/ Out May 15	Pansy -D	In Dec 15/ Out Mar 15, In July/Out Sept
Dusty Miller (Senecio)-D	In Mar 1/ Out May 15	Snapdragon	In or In Garden Mar 1 L / Out Apr 30
Flowering Cabbage -D	In Jul 1/ Out Sept 1	Strawflower -D	In Mar 1 L / Out May 15

HALF-HARDY FLOWERS* can tolerate cold, wet, damp weather but can be damaged or killed by frost.

Ageratum -D	In Feb 15 L / Out May 15	Lobelia	In Feb 10/ Out May 10
Cleome -D	In Mar 15/ Out May 30 or In garden May 15	Marigold -D	In Apr 1/ Out May 10
Dianthus	In Mar 1/ Out May 1	Morning Glory	In Garden April 15
Four O'clock	In or In Garden April 10 L / Out May 10	Nicotiana -D	In Mar 1/ Out May 30
Gazania	In Mar 1/ Out May 15	Petunia -D	In Feb 1 L / Out May 10
Geranium	In Jan 1/ Out May 10	Salvia -D	In Mar 15/ Out May 15

TENDER FLOWERS* need warm soils to germinate and grow properly.

Amaranthus -D	In Feb 20/ Out May 30	Nasturium -D	(In pots) In Apr 15/ Out May 10 or In garden May 15 (Best in poor soil)
Bachelor's Button	In Mar 1/ Out May 15 or In Garden May 15	Ornamental Millet -D	(In pots) In Apr 20/ Out May 10
Begonia	In Jan 15 L / Out May 30	Portulaca -D	In Mar 15/ Out May 15
Browallia	In Feb 10 L / Out May 30	Purple Hyacinth Bean	In Mar 1/ Out May 25
Cockscomb -D	In Apr 10 L / Out May 15	Scarlet Runner Bean	Out May 15 (If temp. stays above 55°F)
China Aster	In Mar 1/ Out May 15	Statice -D	In Mar 1/ Out May 15
Coleus -D	In Mar 1 L / Out May 30	Sunflower	In or In Garden Apr 15/ Out May 15
Cosmos -D	In or In Garden Apr 1 / Out May 30	Verbena -D	In Mar 1 L / Out May 1
Dahlia	(Tuberous roots) In Garden May 30	Vinca (Catharanthus)-D	In Feb 5/ Out May 15
Gaillardia -D	In Mar 1/ Out May 10	Wax Begonia -D	In Mar 1/ Out May 10
Gladiolus	(Corm) In Garden June 15- Jul 15	Zinnia -D	In Apr 1/ Out May 30 or In Garden May 15-June 15
Impatiens	In Feb 1 L / Out May 10		
Melampodium -D	In Mar 30/ Out May 10 or In Garden May 10		

*Annuals are classified as Hardy, Half-Hardy or Tender. Classifications refer to the temperature range that annuals need in order to germinate and grow successfully. A plant's hardiness does not refer to its overall strength or vigor, but to its specific ability to withstand cold. References: Ball Culture Guide, 1999; From Seed to Bloom, 1995; Illinois Master Gardener Manual, 2000; Month-by-Month Gardening in Illinois, 1999.

University of Illinois Extension in Cook County 2022



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