
ZINNIA

A monarch butterfly with orange and black wings is perched on a pink zinnia flower. The butterfly's wings are spread, showing the characteristic black veins and white spots along the edges. The flower has multiple layers of pink petals and a bright yellow center. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage. The word "ZINNIA" is printed in a white, serif font across the middle of the image, partially overlapping the butterfly and the flower.

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Zinnia: The Butterfly Magnet

Beyond their dazzling appearance, Zinnias offer practical advantages that make them irresistible to gardeners of all experience levels. They germinate quickly and reliably from direct-sown seed, thrive in heat that wilts other annuals, tolerate poor soils, and produce more blooms the more you cut them. For cutting gardens, they are unmatched - a single plant can produce dozens of stems over a single season.

Zinnias are native throughout Central and North America, where they grow wild in dry, rocky soils under blazing summer sun. The Aztecs cultivated early forms centuries before European contact, prizing the flowers for ceremonial use. Spanish explorers brought seeds to Europe in the 1500s, where the plants were initially dismissed as unprepossessing weeds.

It took centuries of breeding to unlock the Zinnia's potential. By the early 1800s, European horticulturists had developed double-flowered forms, and by the mid-19th century, Zinnia breeding had become a competitive pursuit. American seed companies embraced Zinnias enthusiastically, and by the 1920s, they were among the most popular annuals in the country.

Few plants rival the Zinnia as a pollinator attractor. Studies have consistently shown that Zinnia flowers (particularly those in orange, red, and pink) rank among the top nectar sources for monarch butterflies, Swallowtails, and a host of native bee species. A garden bed of mixed Zinnias in full summer bloom can host dozens of butterfly species in a single afternoon.

This ecological role has made Zinnias a cornerstone of wildlife-friendly garden design. The National Wildlife Federation lists Zinnias among its top recommendations for butterfly gardens, and monarch waystation programs encourage their planting throughout the United States.

Growing Tips & Care

Heat-loving and sun-hungry, zinnias reward attentive care with an unrelenting parade of bold, beautiful blooms all season long.

Sunlight

Full sun is essential - a minimum of 6-8 hours daily. More sun = more blooms!

Watering

Water deeply at the base and allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Avoid wetting foliage - key to preventing powdery mildew. Drip irrigation is ideal.

Soil & Sowing

Direct-sow after the last frost. Thin to 6-18" depending on variety. Well-draining soil is preferred. Amend heavy clay with compost.

Temperature

Germinate at 70-75°F. Peak performance at 75-95°F. Tolerate heat better than most annuals. Light frost will kill plants.

Fertilizing

Light feeders - over-fertilizing causes lush foliage but fewer blooms. Apply balanced fertilizer at planting. Side-dress mid-season if needed. Avoid high-nitrogen formulas.

Cutting Tips

Harvest in the morning when cool. Cut to a lateral bud or node. Re-cut stems underwater. Change the water every 2 days, and flowers can last up to 7-10 days.

Deadheading

Remove spent flowers promptly - don't allow any blooms to go to seed until you're ready to save seeds in the fall. Harvest stems when blooms are fully open but before they begin to fade. Zinnia stems benefit from a fresh recut under water to prevent air bubbles that reduce vase life.

Cut Flower Generosity

Zinnias possess a rare quality among annuals: the more you cut them, the more they produce! Each harvested stem triggers the plant to branch and form two or more new flowering shoots, meaning a well-managed cutting patch becomes more productive as the season progresses, rather than less. A single packet of seeds, sown in a 4x4' bed, can yield hundreds of stems from late June through hard frost.

Their color range is unmatched among summer annuals - every shade from pure white through cream, yellow, gold, orange, coral, pink, rose, red, burgundy, and bicolors. This versatility makes Zinnias the backbone of summer cutting gardens and farmers' market flower bundles alike.

Properly conditioned, Zinnias last 7-12 days in the vase. The keys are cleanliness and cool temperatures. Always use a scrupulously clean vase (bacteria are the primary cause of early decline), fresh cool water changed every other day, and a commercial floral preservative. Keep arrangements away from direct sun, heating vents, and ripening fruit.

Want to make your own cutting patch?

Dedicate a small sunny bed exclusively to cutting Zinnias. Plant in rows 12-18" apart for easy access and good air circulation. Sow three successions (early June, late June, and mid-July) for stems from July through October. Always include at least one white variety - white Zinnias are the most versatile mixer in arrangements.



Series Spotlight: Magellan

The Magellan series represents the pinnacle of large-flowered Zinnia breeding. Named for the legendary explorer Ferdinand Magellan, this series was developed to push the boundaries of Zinnia bloom size while maintaining the compact, tidy plant habit demanded by modern gardeners. The result? Massive 4-5" blooms on neat 14-18" plants - an engineering feat of plant breeding

Unlike older, giant Zinnia series that tend toward tall, floppy growth requiring staking, Magellan plants form study, well-branched mounds that hold their form even under heavy bloom load and adverse weather. This makes the series ideal for both formal border use and as a cut flower crop.

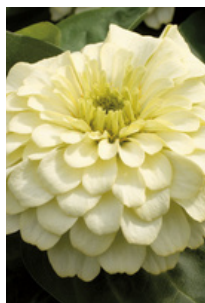
Key Performance Features:

- Giant 4-5" dahlia-form blooms
- Compact 14-18" tidy mounding habit
- Weather-resistant - holds color and form
- Long cutting stems (12-16")
- Outstanding heat tolerance
- Early flowering - starts young!

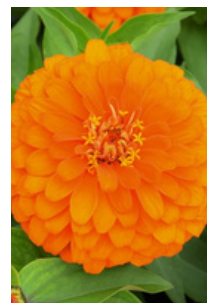
Our favorite varieties:



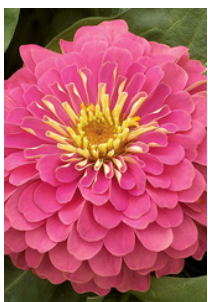
Cherry



Ivory



Orange



Pink



Scarlet



Yellow

Series Spotlight: Profusion

The Profusion Series is an interspecific hybrid Zinnia, a cross between *Zinnia elegans* and *Z. angustifolia* (narrow-leaf Zinnia). This parentage give Profusion its two defining traits: the large, colorful blooms of *Z. elegans* combined with the exceptional disease resistance and spreading habit of *Z. angustifolia*. The result is a truly revolutionary garden plant.

Introduced in the 1990s, Profusion Zinnia immediately earned All-America Selections (AAS) recognition - multiple color introductions in the series have received this prestigious award. AAS winners undergo rigorous multi-site trials across North America before earning recognition.

Key Performance Features:

- Outstanding powdery mildew resistance
- Blooms from transplant to frost
- Compact 12-18" spreading mound
- Self-cleaning - no deadheading needed
- Thrives in heat, humidity, and rain
- Multiple AAS Award Winner

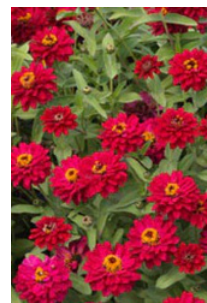
Our favorite varieties:



Cherry



Double
Fire



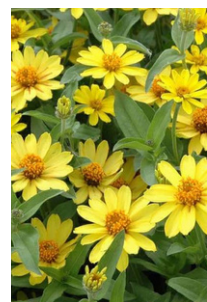
Double
Hot
Cherry



Orange



White



Yellow

Container & Border Recipes for Your Garden



Cottage Garden Dream

Mix Profusion Coral, Pink, and Cherry with blue Salvia, white Cosmos, and purple Verbena. This creates a relaxed, romantic, and endlessly charming vibe through frost.



Moonlight Garden

Magellan Ivory Zinnias with white Agapanthus, Senecio, and pale pink Cosmos. This garden is luminous at dusk and irresistible to hawk moths!



Sunset Border

A gradient band of Magellan Scarlet through Orange, Coral, Yellow, and Ivory creates a living sunset effect along a fence or walking edge.



Tropical Fiesta

Magellan Orange and Scarlet Zinnias make a bright explosion as a centerpiece, ringed with yellow Marigolds and trailing orange Calibrachoa. This combo is hot, bold, and pollinator-approved!