

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large, overflowing bouquet of various cut flowers. The bouquet includes several large, multi-petaled dahlias in shades of orange, pink, and purple, along with smaller flowers like purple and white hydrangeas and red and white gerberas. The flowers are arranged in a white, cylindrical bucket. The background is slightly blurred, showing a person in a light blue shirt.

Cut-Flower Garden Planner

FOR GROWERS NEW TO FLOWERS

Enjoy home-grown cut flowers throughout the summer!

This guide covers:

- Johnny's Easy Cut-Flower Garden Set Components
- Tips for Planning Your Garden Bed
- Sowing & Growing Basics
- Harvest Recommendations
- Bouquet Design Tips & Recipes

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Johnny's Easy Cut-Flower Garden

Our Flowers Product Manager, Hillary Alger, has selected 11 easy-to-grow annual varieties for the home cutting garden. Our [Easy Cut-Flower Garden Set](#) will produce attractive blooms on long stems throughout the growing season. It features a range of colors and textures while supplying the primary elements of a bouquet: focal blooms, spikes, accents, and fillers. All the varieties in the set have been rigorously trialed on our research farm and selected for their high-quality stems and blooms.



FOCAL FLOWERS

Crop	Cultivar or Mix	Product #	Days to Maturity
Sunflower	'Strawberry Blonde'	1744	55-65
Zinnia	'Queeney Red Lime'	1987	75-85
Zinnia	'Benary's Giant Mix'	1346	75-90
Rudbeckia	'Sahara'	4125	100-120

- **Sunflower.** Our set includes 'Strawberry Blonde,' a branching variety with pollenless bicolor, ruby red to pink and lemony-yellow flowers that hold their petals well.
- **Zinnia.** Vigorous cut-and-come-again producers that hold up well in summer rain and heat all over the country. We include two varieties in our set: 'Benary's Giant Mix,' with densely petaled blooms up to 6" across in a range of vibrant hues; and 'Queeney Red Lime,' featuring an unusual palette of antique rose to pink outer petals which gradually lighten through chartreuse to creamy-lime, transitioning to bright, hot pink disks in the center.
- **Rudbeckia.** One of the easiest and most productive cut flowers, rudbeckia is a heat- and drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plant. 'Sahara' produces medium-sized, double blooms in a soft palette of rose, pale yellow, brown, and copper.



SPIKES

Crop	Cultivar or Mix	Product #	Days to Maturity
Amaranthus	'Red Spike'	3786	65-75

- **Amaranthus.** Ideal color and form for late-summer and fall arrangements, our set includes 'Red Spike,' a variety that produces feathery, velvety blooms of a vibrant, unfading deep maroon.



SMALLER ACCENTS

Crop	Cultivar or Mix	Product #	Days to Maturity
Calendula	'Flashback Mix'	1496	50-55
Cosmos	'Double Click Mix'	1780	75-90
Scabiosa	'Pincushion Formula Mix'	1999	90-100

- **Calendula.** Our 'Flashback Mix' produces blooms with a spectacular medley of bicolor petals. Calendula is frost-tolerant, and its petals are edible — a lovely garnish on soups and canapés.
- **Cosmos.** The large, double blooms of our 'Double Click Mix' feature deeply fringed petals in a lively range of colors, including carmine, pink, and white with sunny yellow centers. These dance atop tall, well-branched stalks of fernlike foliage that also makes a fine green filler for bouquets.
- **Scabiosa.** 'Pincushion Formula Mix' features elegant yet sturdy flowers on wiry stems in a diverse palette of black, blue, creamy yellow, pink, bright red, deep blue, salmon rose, and pure white. Intricate, button-like flowers add whimsy to arrangements.



FILLERS

Crop	Cultivar or Mix	Product #	Days to Maturity
Dill	'Bouquet'	920	65-75
Daucus	'Dara'	1968	75-85
Ageratum	'Timeless Mix'	3432	80-100

- **Dill.** 'Bouquet' is a cultivar with delicate, fragrant, and edible foliage that makes a lovely filler for cut-flower arrangements. Airy chartreuse flowers appear as highlights and combine well with almost any color arrangement.
- **Daucus.** With its long-lasting blooms, Daucus or carrot flower makes an outstanding cut-flower filler. 'Dara' is a highly productive cultivar with 7-15 strong, sturdy, upright stems per plant topped by attractive, lacy umbels in shades of dark purple, pink, and white.
- **Ageratum.** 'Timeless Mix' features a blend of taller cultivars with a long flowering period, making it a perfect choice for the cutting garden. Upright, sturdy stems produce tight clusters of flowers in purple, pink, blue, and white. A great gap-filler in bouquets.

**Johnny's
Flowers**

At Johnny's Selected Seeds, we hold seed variety trials to test every variety that we offer in our catalogs and on our website.



'Red Spike' *Amaranthus*



'Strawberry Blonde' *Sunflower*



'Benary's Giant Mix' *Zinnia*



'Dara' *Daucus*



'Double Click Mix' *Cosmos*



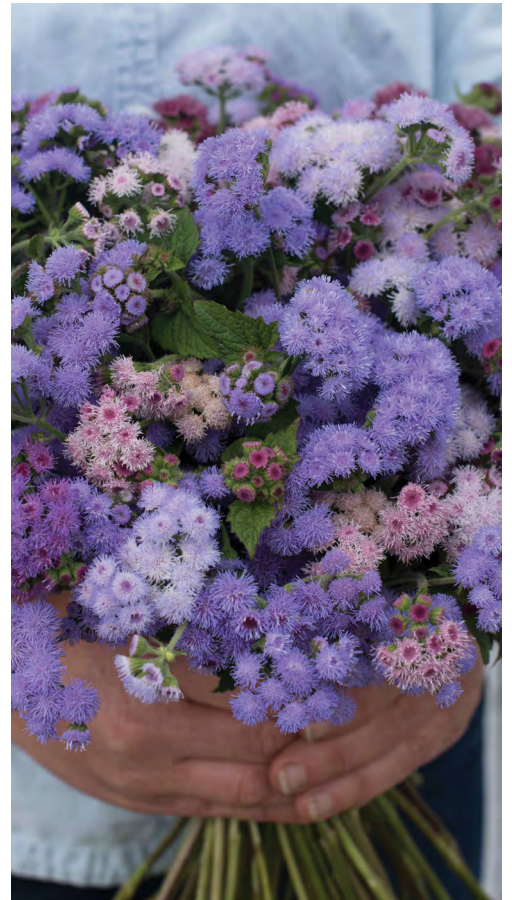
'Sahara' *Rudbeckia*



'Queeny Red Lime' *Zinnia*



'Bouquet' *Dill*



'Timeless Mix' *Ageratum*



'Pincushion Formula Mix' *Scabiosa*



'Flashback Mix' *Calendula*

Sowing & Growing Basics

Our [Easy Cut-Flower Garden Set](#) includes some flower crops that we recommend be transplanted. Start these varieties indoors under [grow lights](#) according to the instructions listed in the chart below, and on the seed packet back. Other flower crops in the set can be direct-seeded, that is, sown directly into the garden bed. Once plants are established a layer of natural mulch such as leaves or straw can be added to the bed, to help retain moisture and suppress weeds.

Crop	Variety	Days to Germination	Sowing & Growing	Light Preference	Plant Spacing	Plant Height	Hardiness Zones
Recommended for transplanting							
<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>	'Timeless Mix'	7–10 days at 75–80°F (24–27°C)	Transplant (Recommended): Sow 6–8 weeks before last frost. Transplant after danger of frost has passed.	Sun	9–12"	24–30"	Annual
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	'Sahara'	8–14 days at 68–72°F (20–22°C)	Transplant (recommended): Sow into 72- to 50-cell plug flats 5–7 weeks before last frost. Cover seed very lightly as light is needed for germination. Harden off seedlings and transplant out after danger of frost has passed. Direct seed: Surface sow 2 weeks before last frost. Heat and drought tolerant once established. Pinching not required. Reseeds.	Sun	12–18"	20–22"	Zones 9–10. Best grown as an annual.
<i>Zinnia elegans</i>	'Benary's Giant Mix' and 'Queen Red Lime'	3–5 days at 80–85°F (27–29°C)	Transplant (recommended): Sow into 72-cell flats, or preferred seedling container, 4 weeks before last frost. Cover seeds. A heat mat will help maintain an accurate temperature. Lower temperatures will result in slower germination: 5–7 days at 70–75°F (21–24°C). Harden off and transplant out after last frost. Direct seed: After last frost, sow 1/4" deep. Succession-sow/plant every 2 weeks for prolonged yields of high-quality stems. Pinching of initial bud or bloom and subsequent deadheading is recommended to encourage strong branching and bloom production.	Sun	9–12"	Varies	Annual
Recommended for either transplanting or direct-seeding							
<i>Amaranthus cruentus</i>	'Red Spike'	7–10 days at 70–75°F (21–24°C)	Transplant: Sow 4–6 weeks before last frost. Direct-Seed: After last frost date. Support advised.	Sun	12–15"	48–60"	Annual
<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	'Double Click Mix'	7–10 days at 68–72°F (20–22°C)	Transplant: Sow into 50-cell plug flats, or preferred seedling container, 5–7 weeks before last frost, covering seeds lightly. Harden off and transplant outdoors after last frost. Direct seed: Sow after last frost, once soil temperature is above 60°F (16°C), covering seeds lightly. Pinching encourages branching.	Sun	9–12"	42–46"	Annual
<i>Scabiosa atropurpurea</i>	'Pincushion Formula Mix'	10–12 days at 65–70°F (18–21°C)	Transplant: Sow 4–6 weeks before last frost. Direct-Seed: After last frost date. Successive plantings every 2–3 weeks until midsummer give the best quality flowers and pods. May require support.	Sun	9–15"	24–36"	Annual
Recommended for direct-seeding							
<i>Daucus carota</i>	'Dara'	12–16 days at 60–65°F (16–18°C)	Direct seed (recommended): In early spring after last frost (sow in the fall in the South). Transplant: Sow 4–6 weeks before planting out.	Sun	3–12"	36–50"	Annual
<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	'Flashback Mix'	7–14 days at 70°F (21°C)	Direct seed (recommended): After last frost at a depth of 1/4". Make 2–3 successive sowings 2–3 weeks apart for continuous blooms from summer to heavy frost. Transplant: Sow 4–5 weeks before last frost.	Sun/ Part Shade	6–12"	18–24"	Annual
Dill <i>Anethum graveolens</i>	'Bouquet'	7–21 days at 65–70°F (18–21°C)	Direct-Seed: Spring through summer.	Sun	2–4"	38–42"	Annual
Sunflower <i>Helianthus annuus</i>	'Strawberry Blonde'	7–14 days at 70–75°F (21–24°C)	Direct seed (recommended): After last frost, sow 1/2" deep. Transplant: Sow into 72- to 50-cell flats 2–3 weeks prior to planting out. Plants dislike root disturbance but sowing indoors and then transplanting the first crop outdoors can be a successful way to get first-early sunflowers. Pinching branching varieties is recommended to encourage branching and longer stems. Succession-sow every 2–3 weeks and/or plant multiple varieties for continued harvest.	Sun	18–24"	60–72"	Annual

Additional Cultural Information

Refer to the seed packet backs or visit the [Key Growing Information](#) for each crop in our online Grower's Library. In addition, we offer tech sheets in our [Flower Grower's Library](#), containing in-depth growing information for larger-scale production of [cosmos](#), [single-stem sunflowers](#), and [zinnias](#), as well as flower crops not included in this starter set.



[Seed Packet Backs](#)



[Key Growing Information](#)



[Grower's Library](#)

Tips for Planning Your Garden Bed

Observe your landscape

Choose a location. An ideal site is one with good drainage that receives at least 6 hours of sunlight per day.

Take a soil test

If you have not recently tested your soil, we recommend you do so before planting. The test results will indicate whether you need to amend your soil to adjust the soil pH or to add nutrients. Your local Cooperative Extension can help you identify a qualified lab and assist you in interpreting the results. Most [test & measuring equipment](#) are quite affordable, and most adjustments are relatively straightforward.

If your soil is quite poor or if drainage is an issue, consider creating raised beds. Raised beds can enhance drainage and reduce weed pressure, making the garden easier to tend, and additionally allow better control over soil quality in general.

Plan your garden

While you need not be restricted to a rectangular plot or to our suggested layout, you will want to plan for approximately 130 square feet of growing space if planting the entire set of 11 varieties. If you choose to design your own garden layout, take note of the height of each variety and avoid planting taller varieties where they may shade out shorter varieties. In addition, be sure to allow for physical access to your plants for tending and cutting.

Harvest Recommendations

- Harvest using a clean, sharp [knife or pruning shears](#).
- Cut stems a few inches longer than needed for the final arrangement, to allow for adjustment during the bouquet-building process.
- [Strip the stems](#) of all lower leaves, to a level where none will be submerged in water.
- Plunge stems immediately into a clean bucket of cold water.
- Protect harvested flowers from direct light, heat, and wind — especially if you will not be arranging them right away.
- If stems have wilted during harvest, place your bucket of stems and cold water in a cool location to rehydrate. Within a few hours they should perk up. Cutting very early in the morning, or alternatively in the evening and hydrating overnight are good options during very hot spells.

Crop	Variety	Days to Maturity	When to Harvest
Sunflower <i>Helianthus annuus</i>	'Strawberry Blonde'	55–65	Fresh: Flowers are just beginning to open. Dried: Flowers are completely open. Hang or use silica gel.
Zinnia <i>elegans</i>	'Queeny Red Lime'	75–85	Before completely open.
	'Benary's Giant Mix'	75–90	
<i>Rudbeckia hirta</i>	'Sahara'	100–120	Blooms are completely open. Deadhead spent flowers to increase bloom.
<i>Amaranthus cruentus</i>	'Red Spike'	65–75	Fresh: When at least ¾ of flowers on the inflorescence are open. Dried: Seed has begun to set and flowers feel firm.
<i>Calendula officinalis</i>	'Flashback Mix'	50–55	Fresh: Flowers ½ open. Edible: Flowers fully open.
<i>Cosmos bipinnatus</i>	'Double Click Mix'	75–90	Petals just opening, but not yet flattened. Deadheading is required to have blooms all summer.
<i>Scabiosa atropurpurea</i>	'Pincushion Formula Mix'	90–100	Flowers almost fully open or seed heads have formed and are still green.
Dill <i>Anethum graveolens</i>	'Bouquet'	65–75	½ to ¾ of florets on the main umbel are open and showing yellow color.
<i>Daucus carota</i>	'Dara'	75–85	80% of flowers in umbel are open and there is no hint of pollen shed.
<i>Ageratum houstonianum</i>	'Timeless Mix'	80–100	Fresh: Flower spikes are ¾ open. Dried: Flowers completely open. Hang. May be air-dried, but flower color often fades.



CUT-FLOWER GARDEN MAP

See our [Sample Cut-Flower Garden Map](#) for a plot 10'x13' in size.

Build Your Bouquet

BEFORE CUTTING

Consider which colors are most appealing and complementary. Choose one type of flower that is either abundant or inspiring. Then choose other blooms with colors that complement that special or abundant flower. This starts the process of constructing your arrangement as you harvest the blooms.

1 SETTING UP YOUR WORK SPACE

It's easiest to create a beautiful arrangement if you can see what you're working on. For best visibility, create your arrangement in one hand while adding stems with the other hand. This allows you to move the bouquet in all directions and get a really good look at it. Or, if arranging directly into a vase, elevate your work surface so the center of your arrangement is nearly at eye-level. This is easily achieved by tipping a bucket or crate upside-down on your countertop and placing the vase on top.



2 START WITH THE STURDIEST (FILLER)

Once you've collected your materials, create a base for your bouquet by placing the sturdiest stems and those with a branching habit in your hand or vase. The base is like a background — it outlines the initial shape and volume of your bouquet. Foliage and blooms that are referred to as filler flowers, such as 'Bouquet' dill, 'Dara,' or ageratum, work well for creating a base and give the bouquet its "backbone." [Foliage and fillers](#) should make up about 40–50% of your bouquet, depending on your preferred style.



3

FOCALS

Once you have established a good base of fillers, add a focal flower, such as a zinnia or sunflower. Rotate the bouquet a third to half-way around and add another focal flower. Repeat this process with another type of focal flower until you have several focal flowers evenly spaced throughout the bouquet.



4

ACCENTS

Next, fill in the bouquet with accent flowers such as calendula, cosmos, and/or scabiosa, to add color and interest.



5

FINISHING TOUCHES

Rotate between the different elements while adding to your bouquet until the final piece looks full and balanced to your eye. Don't be afraid to defy symmetry. Adding a stem or two that shoot off at an angle or gesture downward on their own can be just the graceful note to make your arrangement sing.



Learn how to build a simple bouquet.
[Johnnyseeds.com/build-a-bouquet](https://johnnyseeds.com/build-a-bouquet)

COMPLETE

If arranging in hand, give the base of all your stems a final, fresh snip to suit the height of your vase or container, and place them in the container, filled with clean, cool water. The traditional design rule is that an arrangement should be at least 1½ times the height of its vase. This is a good starting place for making arrangements that appear balanced, but remember, beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so experiment with what appeals to you.

Bouquet Inspiration

Bouquet 1



Filler



Focal



Accent



Bouquet 2



Filler



Focal



Accent



Bouquet 3



Filler



Focal



Accent



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Bouquet Maintenance

Replace the water daily and refresh the flowers by trimming the stems every few days. For best results, keep your bouquet out of direct sunlight.