

Zinnias

Zinnias are annuals that die off after the first fall frost. They are regarded as an all-time garden favorite for their showy flowers and wide variety of colors.

They prefer to have a full sun location. In restricted sun exposure, the plants will be spindly. Zinnias like well-drained soil that will control root rot and reduce the overall plant stress. You can sow seeds directly into the garden soil or plant plugs after the last frost date in Ocean County or when the soil temperature has reached a minimum of 60°F. Planting from a plug allows the spacing to be six inches apart. Spacing provides air circulation between the plants and minimizes powdery mildew and other foliage diseases.

Cutting the flowers and dead heading will encourage more flowering. Zinnias love the heat and will tolerate some drought conditions. Avoid wetting the foliage. Water the roots of zinnias to discourage mildew.

Use a good source to purchase your seeds or plants to make sure the varieties are tolerant and resistant to specific diseases. Some of the problems are powdery mildew and root rot. Japanese beetles, earwigs, aphids, and mites can be the pests that feed on the zinnia leaves. You can pick or shake off the larger bugs or wash off the mites and aphids. Zinnias are deer resistant.

Rutgers recommends the following cultivars: 'Benary's Giant', 'Oklahoma', 'Peppermint Stick', 'Whirligig', and 'Zowie Yellow Flame'. These zinnias have been evaluated for their lasting power after cutting. 'Benary's Giant' and 'Oklahoma' are among the best cutting varieties. A favorite of zinnia lovers is the 'Profusion' Series sold at local nurseries and in a variety of colors such as, cherry, white, orange, and yellow. This series seems more resistant to the powdery mildew and root rot.

Harvest zinnias when the bloom centers are just opening. Before you place them in water, remove the lower leaves. Remember to change the water each day. Zinnias are beautiful for arrangements alone or mixed with other flowers. They also provide food for bees and butterflies.

See <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/publication.php?pid=FS1161> for more information.



Checklist for September

Flower and Vegetable Garden

- ✓ Dig up and cure tender summer bulbs when foliage turns brown. Store in a cool, dry place. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/storing_and_saving_tender_plant_bulbs_during_winter
- ✓ Plant winter pansies and fall annuals, i.e., ornamental cabbage and kale.
- ✓ Collect seeds from perennials and annuals. Store in a cool dry place.
- ✓ Buy and plant spring flowering bulbs, such as daffodils and tulips. See Rutgers fact sheet FS1220, "Spring Flowering Bulbs."

Indoor Plants

- ✓ Ensure houseplants are pest-free before taking them indoors.
- ✓ Check to see if your houseplants are root bound. If so, remove carefully and repot. <https://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/bringin.html>

Lawn

- ✓ Continue to mow and fertilize lawn, as needed. This is the best time to fertilize and seed your lawn or dethatch and aerate, if needed.
- ✓ Check Ocean County Hazardous Waste schedule at 1-800- 55RECYCLE or (732) 506-5047 or www.co.ocean.nj.us/SolidWaste to dispose of pesticides and other waste.