

Did You Know?



Calendula, *Calendula officinalis*

- *Calendula officinalis* has acquired many common names around the world, including calendula, pot marigold, poor man's saffron, poet's marigold and Mary's gold. The common name marigold should not be confused with the common garden marigold, *Tagetes* spp.
- Calendula flower petals are the part of the plant most often used in culinary recipes, skin care and other medicinal preparations. The flowers make excellent cut flowers for arrangements.
- Considered to have magical powers, calendula was used as protection against evil and disease, including the plague. Robbery victims who wore a calendula flower could identify who had robbed them. And in the court room, protection, psychic powers, and triumph in legal matters resulted from carrying calendula flowers in a pocket.
- At one time, flowers were strewn around doors to prevent evil spirits from entering and under beds to promote prophetic dreams and make dreams come true.
- Calendulas range in color from a pale yellow to a vibrant orange. They are an annual or short-lived perennial and often self-seed if flowers are left on the plant. Sow seeds 6-8 weeks before frost or plant seeds or transplants outside after the last frost date. Plant in full sun and rich, well-drained soils. In warm regions, calendula does best in the spring and fall.
- Add calendula petals to salads, compound butter, baked goods or in place of saffron. The leaves are edible and used in salads, but are bitter.
- The petals have anti-oxidants such as carotenoids, flavonoids and lutein. They have anti-fungal and anti-microbial properties which aid in wound care.
- Historically the petals are used to dye textiles, ranging in color from bright yellow to khaki green. They were a less expensive alternative to saffron. They are also used in hair rinses to lighten hair color.
- Medicinal uses date back to ancient Greek, Roman, Middle Eastern and Indian cultures. Scorpion bites were treated with calendula by the ancient Romans.
- The petals have anti-inflammatory properties and have been used both topically for a variety of skin conditions and wounds as well as in preparations for digestive issues, throat inflammation and eye pain. It is also used in cosmetics.

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