

# Grow Well

## **Growing plants to feel good**

Experience and share the wellbeing benefits of plants and gardening through growing calendula with your community.



# Paint your town orange with colourful calendula

**Hello! Thank you for taking part in Grow Well, our new RHS Communities initiative designed to help you and your community discover the wellbeing powers of plants.**

The chances are you're already a convert to the goodness of gardening, but we think sharing that passion is the key to living and growing well. So, we're asking you and your school or group to spread the magic and get growing with your community. Don't worry if you're a gardening novice, this is a great place to get started!

Inside this pack you'll find:



Calendula (pot marigold)  
seeds



Plant labels



Some helpful activity  
ideas to help you connect  
with your neighbours

**Before you sow and grow your calendula, we wanted to tell you more about this small-but-mighty flower.**

# Calendula Fact File



## Not-so-modern medicine

Throughout history, calendula has been used to treat all sorts of ailments from toothache to plague!

In the middle ages, astrological herbalists believed that every part of the body was connected to a planet - calendula was seen as a herb of the sun so it was thought to be good for the heart.

Calendula oil can still be found in skin care products today, and is thought to have anti-inflammatory properties.

Although we don't recommend taking calendula as medicine without professional help, why not try our mindfulness activity if you want to find out about the wellbeing properties of plants.



## Know your plants

Did you know there are two types of marigold? Calendula, which are also known as pot marigolds, and Tagetes, commonly known as French marigolds. It's important to know the difference as calendula are safe to eat whereas tagetes are not. In fact, if you sprinkle tagetes petals on your summer salad it will make you very ill! For this reason we ask that you don't use any marigold ingredients in recipes or skin care without a seasoned gardener present. The seeds we have sent you are perfectly safe but make sure to buy the right variety if you need to purchase any extras.

## Calendula officinalis

*Common marigold*

Although they are commonly known as a marigold, calendula are actually part of the daisy family. They are a closer relation to sunflowers than their adopted French marigold cousins.

Read our calendula fact file to find out more about these beautiful blooms...



## History

Calendula have a long and rich history, they have been cultivated in the UK since the early 1,200s. It has been cooked, brewed and dried for hundreds of years across the world, appearing in cookbooks, wine recipes and civil war medical journals.

The Victorians used calendula as a flower of remembrance, often associated with grief and mourning.

Calendula has even had a few less conventional uses and in the 16th century it was regaled for its magical powers. It was claimed that calendula could help you see fairies if brewed in a potion or help you choose a suitable suitor if rubbed all over your body as part of a white wine mixture... we don't recommend trying these at home though!<sup>2</sup>



## Pollinator paradise

Pollinators love calendula! Their bright flowers are a welcome pollen picnic, not just for bees but for hoverflies too, who often get overlooked as garden helpers. This makes them an excellent addition to a wildlife garden.

Calendula also make fantastic companion plants for your veg patch too. The pollinators they attract will help to give you a fruitful harvest and they also draw in predators for those pesky pests. Ladybirds and lacewings love calendula and will be sure to munch though any aphids on their way past.

The most beneficial calendula have an open flower. A general rule of thumb we follow is, if you can see the pollen rich centre of a flower then bees and butterflies probably can too.

<sup>1</sup> <https://oldoperatingtheatre.com/from-the-herb-garret-dried-marigold-flowers/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Rodale\\_s\\_Illustrated\\_Encyclopedia\\_of\\_Herhtml?id=htGD3Y7WNxwC&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Rodale_s_Illustrated_Encyclopedia_of_Herhtml?id=htGD3Y7WNxwC&redir_esc=y)

# How does growing calendula help you feel good?

## Nature connection

The University of Derby have been working to measure the effects of 'Nature Connectedness' on wellbeing. They have found that a strong connection with nature helps us feel good and function well, two of the key measures of happiness.

Researchers also found links between nature connection and pro-nature behaviours, meaning if you feel connected to nature you're more likely to try and look after it by doing things like, recycling, feeding the birds and planting for pollinators.<sup>1</sup>

## Stress management

RHS scientists have found that gardening can help to reduce people's stress levels. Dr Lauriane Chalmin-Pui, RHS Wellbeing Fellow explains;

*"When gardening, our brains are pleasantly distracted by nature around us. This shifts our focus away from ourselves and our stresses, thereby restoring our minds and reducing negative feelings."*

The team have also found gardening to have a 'dose-effect' meaning the more you garden the better you feel.<sup>2</sup>

## Physical activity

The NHS advises adults get at least 150 minutes, and children at least 60 minutes, of moderate intensity exercise each week. Not only is moving our bodies great for strengthening muscles and keeping in shape, it's also fantastic for our mental health and wellbeing.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, physical activity can help boost our mood, increase our self-esteem and reduce stress and anxiety. All the more reason to get outdoors and dig in, gardening is a great form of exercise.<sup>3</sup>

## Social connection

Social isolation and loneliness are serious risk factors to our physical and mental health. The Campaign to End Loneliness, a charity raising awareness of the loneliness epidemic in the UK, report that:

*"The effect of loneliness and isolation on mortality is comparable to the impact of well-known risk factors such as obesity, and has a similar influence as cigarette smoking"*

Loneliness is associated with heart disease, dementia, depression and many other conditions. Gardening together is a great way to form strong social connections, and give people a sense of belonging in their environment.<sup>4</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.derby.ac.uk/research/centres-groups/nature-connectedness-research-group/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264275121000160#bb0140>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-using-exercise>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/>

# Grow and give

If you're topping up your seeds from the local garden centre, be sure to pick up calendula, not their marigold cousin tagetes.

## You might want to:

- Make connections with each other and your community by sowing your seeds together. Plant a pot for yourself and a pot for someone who needs it
- Decorate the doorsteps on your street
- Sow your seeds in a community bed so everyone can enjoy them
- Grow your plants to maturity and cut them to give out as posies

If you want to take it to the next level there are plenty of flowers that will grow well alongside calendula and would look beautiful in a bed or a bouquet.



Some of our favourite plants to accompany calendula are:



**Blue cornflower**  
*Centaurea cyanus*



**Love in the mist**  
*Nigella damascena*



**Blue bedder**  
*Echium vulgare*



**Cosmos**  
*Cosmos bipinnatus*

You can pick up seeds at your local garden centre, supermarket or online.

There are plenty of other ways you can support your wellbeing using the power of plants, check out our activity ideas and see if any of them take your fancy.

They are a great way to connect with others in your community - why not invite them to join you in person or on Zoom?



# Let us know how you've been **Growing Well!**

Share your story with us via email  
**communities@rhs.org.uk** or on social media

 **@rhsgrassroots**

 **@rhsschoolgardening @rhscommunitygardening**

 **@RHSSchools @RHSBloom**



Share me with your group and then recycle me.