FLOWERS · A SUNNY PORCH, PATIO, OR FRONT STEP

Let's grow french marigold.

Tagetes patula

This plan is for **Compact French marigold**

A bright spot on the front steps.

12-inch pot **1 compact start**

Before you start

Set your compact French marigold outdoors after frost danger has passed; choose a sunny spot for its seasonal display.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 27, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Sun loving

Choose at least 6 hours of direct sun for this outdoor flower pot.

WATER

Moderate watering

Keep new roots moist; let the top inch dry after the plant establishes.

FEEDING

Light feeder

Start with enriched mix; add an occasional measured feed only when needed.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One 12-inch-wide pot, at least 10 inches deep, with drainage holes
- ✓ 1 compact French marigold nursery start
- ✓ Fresh potting mix and small scissors

THE SOIL

Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US; contains starter nutrients—check your bag)

Start with what's on this list. Add plant food only when the feeding section says it's needed.

YOUR SIMPLE GROWING PLAN

One pot. Here's the plan.

A sunny porch, patio, or front step. Start with **nursery start**.

THE POT

12-inch pot

About 12 inches wide and at least 10 inches deep, with open drainage holes.

HOW MANY

1 compact start

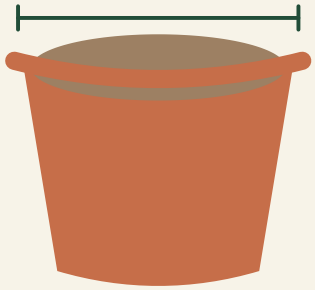
Choose a French marigold labeled to stay compact.

THE CONTAINER

12-inch pot

START WITH

1 compact start



Drainage holes



Illustration · not to scale

12-inch pot · 1 compact start About 12 inches wide and at least 10 inches deep, with open drainage holes. Choose a French marigold labeled to stay compact. Original illustration; not to scale.

01 **Pick a compact plant**

Choose Tagetes patula, not a tall African marigold, for this small-pot plan.

02 **Plant after frost**

Keep the nursery root ball at the same soil level. Water it in.

03 **Find a sunny spot**

Place it on a bright porch or patio where you can easily check the pot.

04 **Snip faded flowers**

Remove spent flower heads and damaged growth to keep the plant tidy.

Help with the setup: drainage holes and saucers · potting mix vs. garden soil.

Other ways to start

Start from seed

After frost, sow 2 French marigold seeds ¼ inch deep near the center and keep the seed zone moist. Snip the weaker seedling after true leaves appear, leaving one plant. Minnesota Extension gives 5–8 days to sprout at 70–75°F; cool outdoor mix can take longer. The two-seed layout is our small-pot adaptation.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Check each morning. Keep the seed zone and newly planted root ball lightly moist. Once established, water when the top inch is dry; wet the roots and drain.

FERTILIZER

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

AMOUNT

1 tablespoon in 1 US gallon of water

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

One conditional top-up; reassess before repeating.

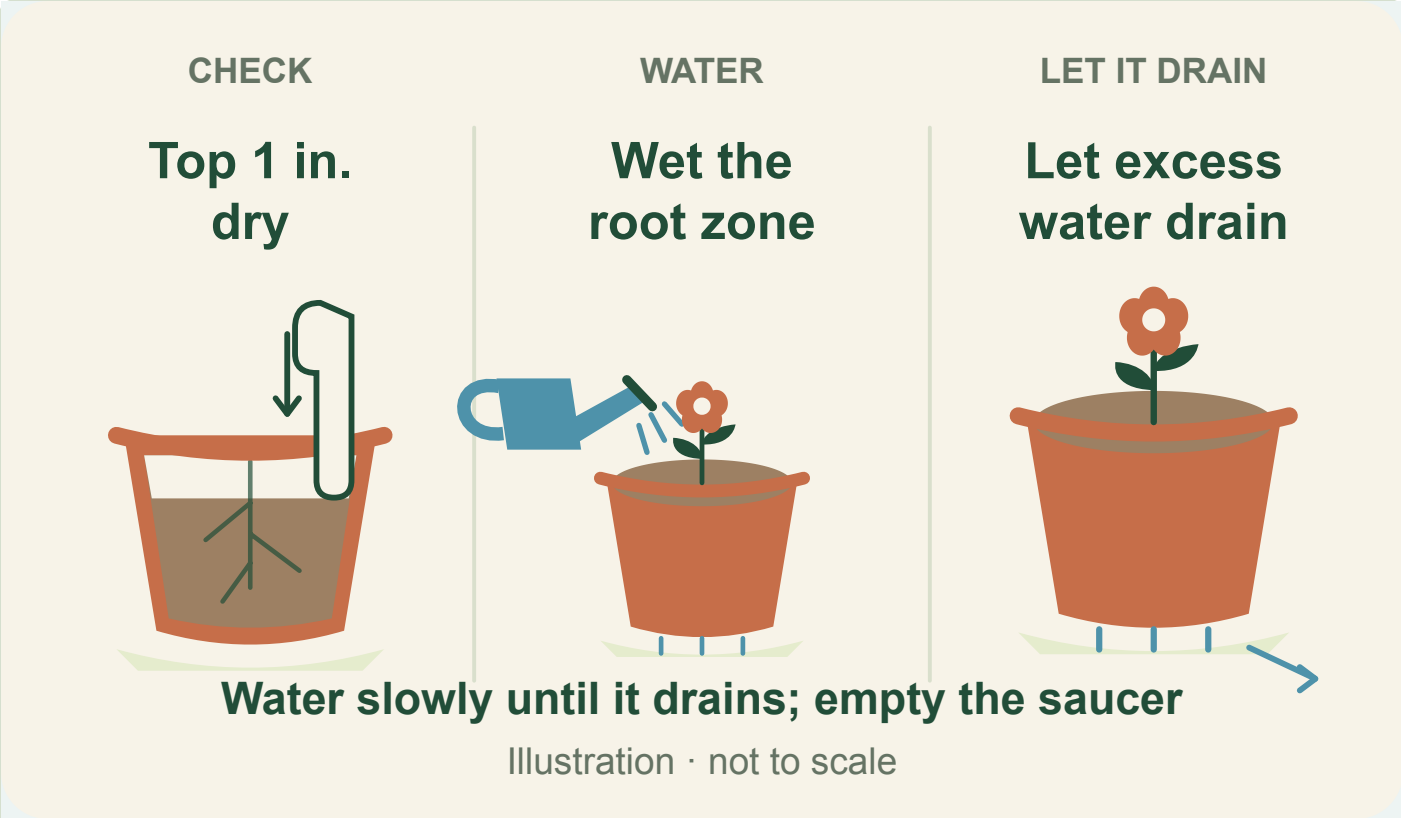
WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

Start only after the feed in your purchased mix has ended and growth needs nutrients. Check light, watering, and drainage first; do not automatically feed a healthy display every 14 days.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check each morning. For a newly planted start, feel its root ball as well as the surrounding mix and keep both lightly moist. For seeds, keep the shallow seed zone and young roots moist; do not wait for the top inch to dry. Once established, water when that top inch is dry. Pour onto the mix until excess drains, then empty the saucer. Recheck in hot or windy weather.



Check before watering. Check each morning. Keep the seed zone and newly planted root ball lightly moist. Once established, water when the top inch is dry; wet the roots and drain. Original illustration; not to scale.

The easy rule

Check first. Water only when the plant needs it.

02 / PLANT FOOD

Exactly what to feed it.

Add no extra fertilizer at planting in the enriched mix listed here. Read your purchased bag for when extra feeding should begin; “up to two months” is not a fixed countdown for every pot. Marigolds need little fertilizer, so do not add a weekly feed just to chase more flowers.



1 tablespoon in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Apply only enough solution to wet this pot and drain; the mixing batch is not the amount to pour on. One conditional top-up; reassess before repeating. Start only after the feed in your purchased mix has ended and growth needs nutrients. Check light, watering, and drainage first; do not automatically feed a healthy display every 14 days. Original illustration; not to scale.

US PRODUCT REFERENCE



Miracle-Gro

Water Soluble All Purpose

24-8-16

Soluble: mix into water

Check the official US product ↗

Illustrated reference; check the manufacturer's current packaging and US label.

A SPECIFIC US PRODUCT

Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16)

If the bag's starter feeding period has passed and an actively growing plant needs a nutrient top-up, dissolve 1 tablespoon of Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16) in 1 US gallon of water. Apply to already moist mix, using enough to wet the roots and drain. The gallon is a mixing batch, not one pot's serving. Check light, watering, and drainage first. Reassess before repeating; this is an occasional top-up, not an automatic 14-day program. Follow your US package and do not stack it with another fertilizer.

Check the manufacturer's product page ↗

Use the named US formulation. A different product or concentration needs different directions. The amount mixed is a batch, not a dose to pour into one pot.

---

03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

When to expect flowers

A nursery plant with buds gives you a head start. Bloom timing from seed depends on the variety and growing conditions.

When to set marigolds outside

Put tender starts outside after local frost risk has passed. A frost ends the outdoor annual display in colder climates.

For regional planting windows, find your local Cooperative Extension office ↗.

Something looking off?

Will this pot keep pests away from my vegetables?

Do not rely on it as a pest barrier. Some French marigolds can suppress certain soil nematodes when grown as a cover crop before vegetables. That does not show that one flower pot beside a tomato protects it from insects. Inspect the vegetable itself when you see damage.

Do bronze spots on the lower leaves mean it needs fertilizer?

Not necessarily. Iowa State notes that low-pH growing mix can make iron and manganese too available, producing bronze speckling. Other problems can also mark leaves. Do not add an acidifier or more food from this symptom alone; check watering and ask local Extension about testing the mix if it persists.

Is French marigold the same as pot marigold?

No. This guide is for Tagetes patula. Pot marigold usually means Calendula officinalis, a different plant. Use the botanical name on the nursery tag or seed packet when choosing a growing guide.

Choosing plants and removing faded flowers

Check the marigold's mature size

Choose compact Tagetes patula and check its mature-size tag. Nebraska Extension suggests one marigold per 12-inch container. The 10-inch depth here is our roomy starter choice, not a tested minimum. A tall African marigold needs a different space and support plan.

Remove faded and rotting flowers

Removing faded heads helps the display. In humid conditions, clear rotting blooms and give the foliage space for air to move.

Help with your next step.

Compare your first flower project

Choose a flowering pot by its starting method and the outdoor space you have.

Check the feed already in your potting mix

Read the bag before adding more fertilizer to a light-feeding marigold.

BEHIND THIS GUIDE

Where the advice comes from.

Plant care is based on the sources below. Planting layouts and beginner routines combine that guidance into one practical plan; they are editorial choices, not results from a Plant Care Steps growing trial.

- NC State: French marigold identity and care ↗
  https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/tagetes-patula/
- University of Minnesota: seeds and light feeding ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/marigolds
- Illinois Extension: container feeding ↗
  https://extension.illinois.edu/container-gardens/fertilizing
- Manufacturer: starter feed in the named potting mix ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/potting-mix/miracle-gro-organic-potting-mix/78951430.html
- Manufacturer: US fertilizer formula and application directions ↗
  https://scottsmiraclegro.com/en-us/brands/miracle-gro/products/plant-food-and-care/miracle-gro-water-soluble-all-purpose-plant-food.html
- Iowa State: checking moisture in outdoor containers ↗
  https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/care-plants-growing-containers
- Nebraska Extension: one marigold per 12-inch container (PDF, page 3) ↗
  https://extension.unl.edu/sites/unl.edu.ianr.extension/files/media/file/2026%20Special%20Garden%20Project%20Newsletter.pdf
- Iowa State: marigold nutrition, bronze speckling, and pest-control limits ↗
  https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/growing-marigolds-home-garden

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

Published September 23, 2026 · Updated September 27, 2026

Compiled with AI assistance. These first-edition guides have not yet had an independent horticultural review. Read our editorial approach.