FLOWERS · A SUNNY PATIO WITH ROOM FOR A SPREADING PLANT

Let's grow nasturtium.

Tropaeolum 'Empress of India'

This plan is for **Empress of India nasturtium**

Two seeds, one pot, and a bright little splash of red.

12-inch pot **2 seeds → 1 plant**

Before you start

Sow outdoors after frost danger has passed; in very hot regions, choose a milder frost-free growing window instead of peak summer heat.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 28, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Sun for flowers

Aim for at least 6 hours of direct sun; afternoon shade can help during very hot summers.

WATER

Moist, with drainage

Keep seeds and new roots moist; use the top-inch check only after establishment.

FEEDING

No extra at the start

Start with the mix's nutrients; extra nitrogen can favor leaves over flowers.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One 12-inch-wide draining pot, at least 10 inches deep
- ✓ Fresh potting mix and a gentle watering can
- ✓ 2 Empress of India nasturtium seeds

THE SOIL

Miracle-Gro Organic Potting Mix (US; includes 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 patio with room for a spreading plant. Start with **seeds**.

THE POT

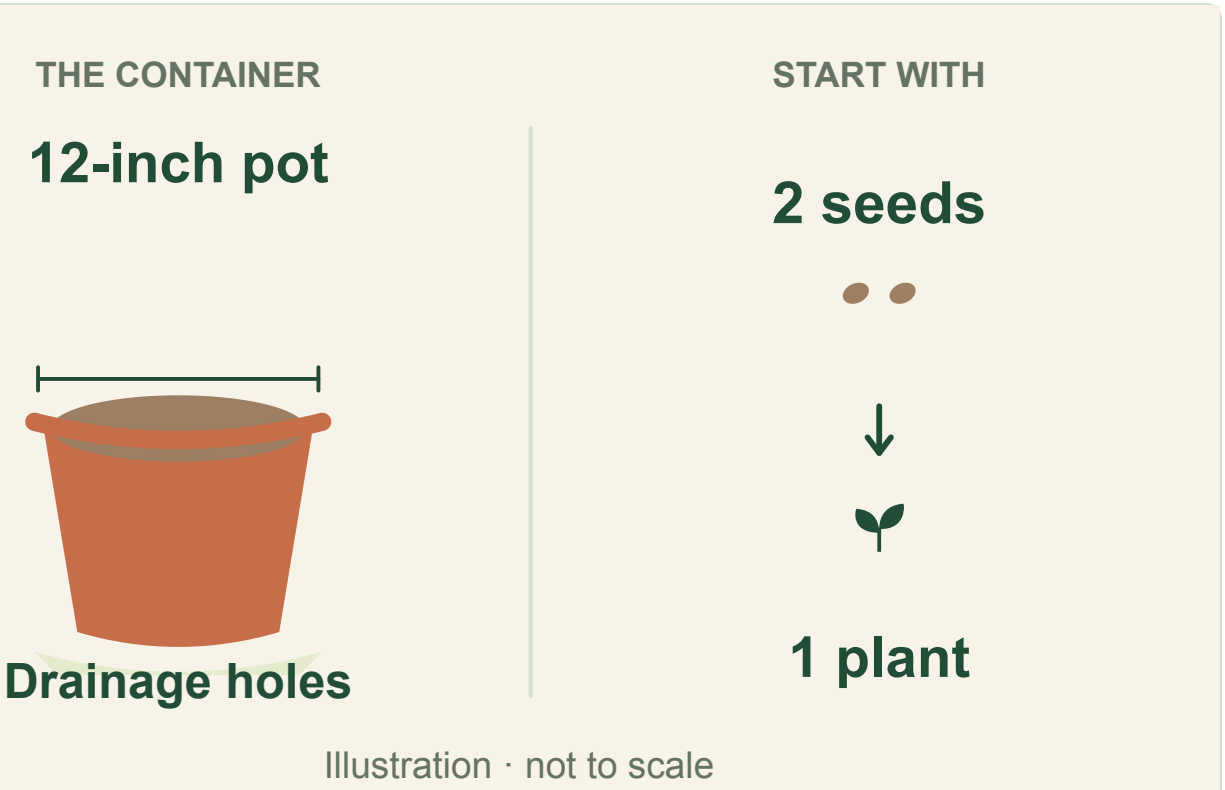
12-inch pot

About 12 inches wide and at least 10 inches deep, with drainage; give the foliage space over the rim.

HOW MANY

2 seeds → 1 plant

Choose compact Empress of India; keep one plant after thinning, not both seedlings.



12-inch pot · 2 seeds → 1 plant About 12 inches wide and at least 10 inches deep, with drainage; give the foliage space over the rim. Choose compact Empress of India; keep one plant after thinning, not both seedlings. Original illustration; not to scale.

01

Fill and dampen the pot

Leave 1 inch of space below the rim. Moisten the mix evenly before sowing; do not add fertilizer granules.

02

Sow two near the center

After frost danger passes, place 2 seeds about 2 inches apart and cover with ½ inch of mix. Water gently and keep the seed zone moist. Follow your packet if its directions differ.

03

Keep one strong seedling

After true leaves appear, snip the weaker seedling at mix level. Do not pull it out and disturb the other roots. Keep the young root zone moist as the remaining plant grows.

04

Make room for the flowers

Let the leaves spread over the rim. Remove faded flowers to encourage more blooms and check the mix each morning.

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

Other ways to start

Buy one young nursery start

Choose a labeled compact nasturtium, ideally Empress of India. Set its intact root ball at its previous soil level and water it in. A long trailing or climbing type needs a different amount of space.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Keep the seed zone and young roots moist. Check a new nursery plant's root ball too. Once growing well, check daily; water as the top inch starts drying, then drain and empty the saucer.

FERTILIZER

No added fertilizer for this starting plan

AMOUNT

None

WHAT THAT AMOUNT COVERS

No fertilizer dose to calculate.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

No automatic feeding schedule.

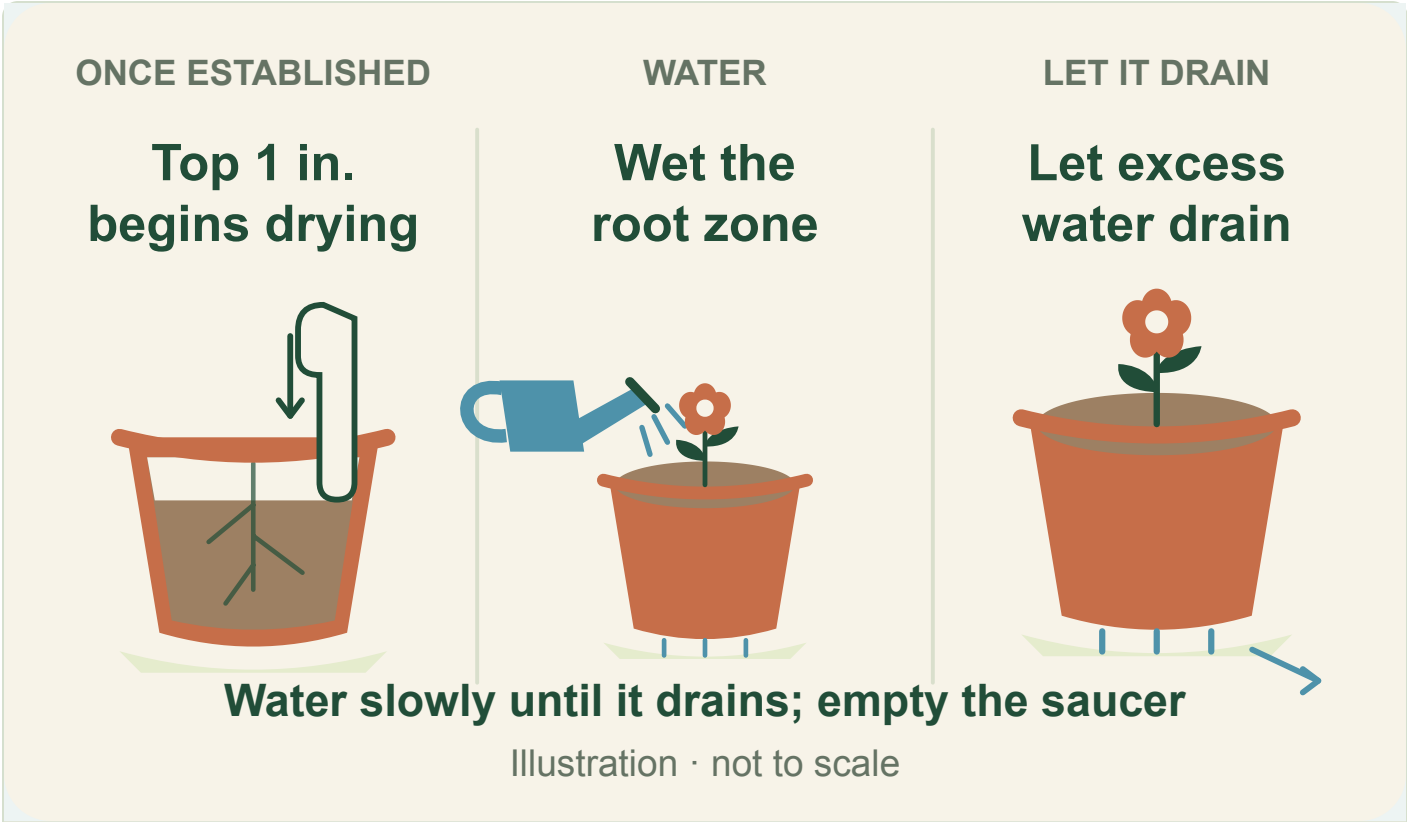
WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

Add no extra fertilizer with fresh enriched mix. If growth later weakens, check light, moisture and drainage before reassessing the bag's nutrients; few flowers alone do not call for feeding.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

Check each morning. Keep the seed zone and young roots moist, not soggy; misting the surface alone can leave deeper mix dry. For a nursery start, check its original root ball as well as the surrounding mix until roots settle in. Once growing well, water when the top inch starts drying. Pour slowly onto the mix until water exits the holes, then empty the saucer. Check again in heat or wind. The amount changes with the pot and weather; there is no fixed cupful or daily watering rule.



Check before watering. Keep the seed zone and young roots moist. Check a new nursery plant's root ball too. Once growing well, check daily; water as the top inch starts drying, then drain and empty the saucer. 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 when sowing in the fresh enriched mix listed here. Do not add manure, fertilizer granules, or a liquid bloom feed to this recipe. Nasturtium is a light feeder; extra nitrogen can make a leafy pot with fewer flowers.

THIS STARTING PLAN

No added fertilizer



Skip extra feed

Follow the conditions in this plan

Illustration · not to scale

None No fertilizer dose to calculate. No automatic feeding schedule. Add no extra fertilizer with fresh enriched mix. If growth later weakens, check light, moisture and drainage before reassessing the bag's nutrients; few flowers alone do not call for feeding. Original illustration; not to scale.

USE THE NUTRIENTS ALREADY IN THE MIX

No separate fertilizer to buy at the start

Keep separate fertilizer at zero for this starter plan. The mix already contains nutrients; its general follow-on feeding advice is not a nasturtium-specific schedule. If growth later turns weak or pale, first check light, moisture, drainage, and the bag's nutrient information. Reassess then, rather than feeding simply because there are few flowers. This does not promise that old mix will supply nutrients forever.

03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Sprouting and first flowers

Johnny's lists 7–14 days for germination at 60–65°F and about 55–65 days from sowing to flowering for Empress of India. Its listed height is 16–20 inches, despite the compact habit. These are supplier estimates, not deadlines; leave space for leaves to spread past the pot.

When to sow in mild, frost-free weather

Sow outdoors after frost danger has passed. In very hot regions, choose a milder frost-free growing window and consider afternoon shade. Use local Extension dates rather than a nationwide planting month.

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

Something looking off?

Do I have to soak nasturtium seeds first?

No. Wisconsin Extension says a few hours or an overnight soak can improve germination; it is an optional step. Direct sowing is still the main route in this guide. If your packet gives a pretreatment instruction, follow that for the seed you bought.

Can I start Empress of India indoors?

Yes. Johnny's suggests sowing 3–4 weeks before planting out. Use an individual pot with drainage and give seedlings strong light. Gradually acclimate them to outdoor sun and wind, then transplant after frost with the root ball intact. Direct sowing avoids that extra move.

What should I do about aphids on the new shoots?

Check the leaf undersides and shoot tips for clusters of small, soft-bodied insects. If they are causing damage, use a water spray firm enough to dislodge them without breaking the stems, then recheck. Small numbers often cause little harm. Avoid an automatic broad-spectrum spray that can also kill their natural predators.

Choosing the cultivar and thinning seedlings

Check for the Empress of India cultivar

Compact garden nasturtiums appear under both Tropaeolum majus and T. minus in horticultural references. The practical choice here is the named Empress of India cultivar, not every plant sold simply as nasturtium.

Keep one seedling in the pot

Our 12-inch-wide, 10-inch-deep pot holds one plant so a beginner can check moisture easily. It is an editorial layout, not a measured optimum: Johnny's allows several nasturtiums in a 10-inch container. Two seeds here provide one spare; they are not two plants to keep.

Help with your next step.

Check the food already in the bag

Avoid adding another feeding program when your nasturtium's potting mix already includes starter fertilizer.

Learn the moisture check for an outdoor pot

Use dampness and drainage to decide when to water instead of pouring the same amount every day.

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.

- Wisconsin Extension: dwarf types, sowing, and restrained feeding ↗
  https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/nasturtium-tropaeolum-majus/
- Johnny's Selected Seeds: Empress of India cultivar and flowering estimate ↗
  https://www.johnnyseeds.com/flowers/nasturtium/empress-of-india-nasturtium-seed-1824.32.html
- NC State: nasturtium light, growth, and pests ↗
  https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/tropaeolum-majus/
- Iowa State: monitoring nutrients in containers with pre-fertilized mix ↗
  https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/how-to/care-plants-growing-containers
- 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
- Minnesota Extension: seed moisture, thinning, and acclimating seedlings ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/gardening-in-minnesota/starting-seeds-indoors
- Minnesota Extension: identifying aphids and using water first ↗
  https://extension.umn.edu/garden-and-home/yard-and-garden/yard-and-garden-insects/aphids

Something needs updating? Suggest a correction

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