FLOWERS · AN OPEN, SUNNY PATIO WITH GOOD AIRFLOW

Let's grow zinnia.

Zinnia elegans

This plan is for **Dwarf Zinnia elegans**

Is this your plant? Choose a compact nursery start or Thumbelina Mix seed for this 12-inch pot. Tall cutting varieties and other zinnia species need their own space and care plan.

A small pot of summer color.

12-inch pot **1 compact start**

Before you start

Plant after frost danger has passed. Keep direct-sown seeds and young roots moist; use the top-inch check after the plant is established.

By jennyzhuang

Sources checked September 26, 2026 View sources ↗

LIGHT

Full sun

Choose at least 6 hours of direct sunlight.

WATER

Moderate watering

Water the soil and let it drain; avoid wetting leaves repeatedly.

FEEDING

Moderate feeding

Use the purchased mix's feeding start point, then a measured 14-day routine while growing.

BEFORE YOU START

Your little kit.

- ✓ One 12-inch-wide, 12-inch-deep pot with drainage
- ✓ 1 compact Zinnia elegans nursery plant
- ✓ Fresh potting mix and clean snips

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.

An open, sunny patio with good airflow. Start with **nursery start**.

THE POT

12-inch pot

About 12 inches wide and deep, with open drainage holes; for one compact plant.

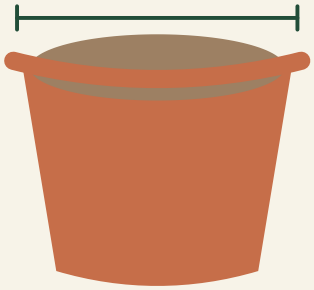
HOW MANY

1 compact start

Choose a dwarf Zinnia elegans, rather than a tall cutting variety.

THE CONTAINER

12-inch pot



Drainage holes

START WITH

1 compact start



Illustration · not to scale

12-inch pot · 1 compact start About 12 inches wide and deep, with open drainage holes; for one compact plant. Choose a dwarf Zinnia elegans, rather than a tall cutting variety. Original illustration; not to scale.

01 **Read the mature-size label**

Choose a compact cultivar for this one-pot plan.

02 **Plant after frost**

Keep the top of the root ball at the soil surface, fill around it, and water.

03 **Give it sun and air**

Avoid tucking it into a shaded, crowded corner.

04 **Keep the display tidy**

Cut faded blooms and remove damaged leaves. Water below the foliage.

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

Other ways to start

Grow from seed

Choose a compact variety such as Thumbelina. After frost, sow 2 seeds ¼ inch deep near the center and keep the seed zone moist. Snip the weaker seedling when true leaves develop, keeping one plant. Burpee gives a typical 7–10-day germination window; cold mix can delay it. The two-seed layout is our small-pot adaptation.

YOUR EVERYDAY ROUTINE

Water & fertilizer at a glance.

WATER WHEN

Established plant: check daily; water when the top inch is dry, then drain. Seeds and young roots: keep the seed zone moist.

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. Wet the root zone and let excess drain; the gallon is a mixing batch, not a per-pot serving.

HOW OFTEN TO FEED

Every 14 days during active growth.

WHEN TO START OR PAUSE

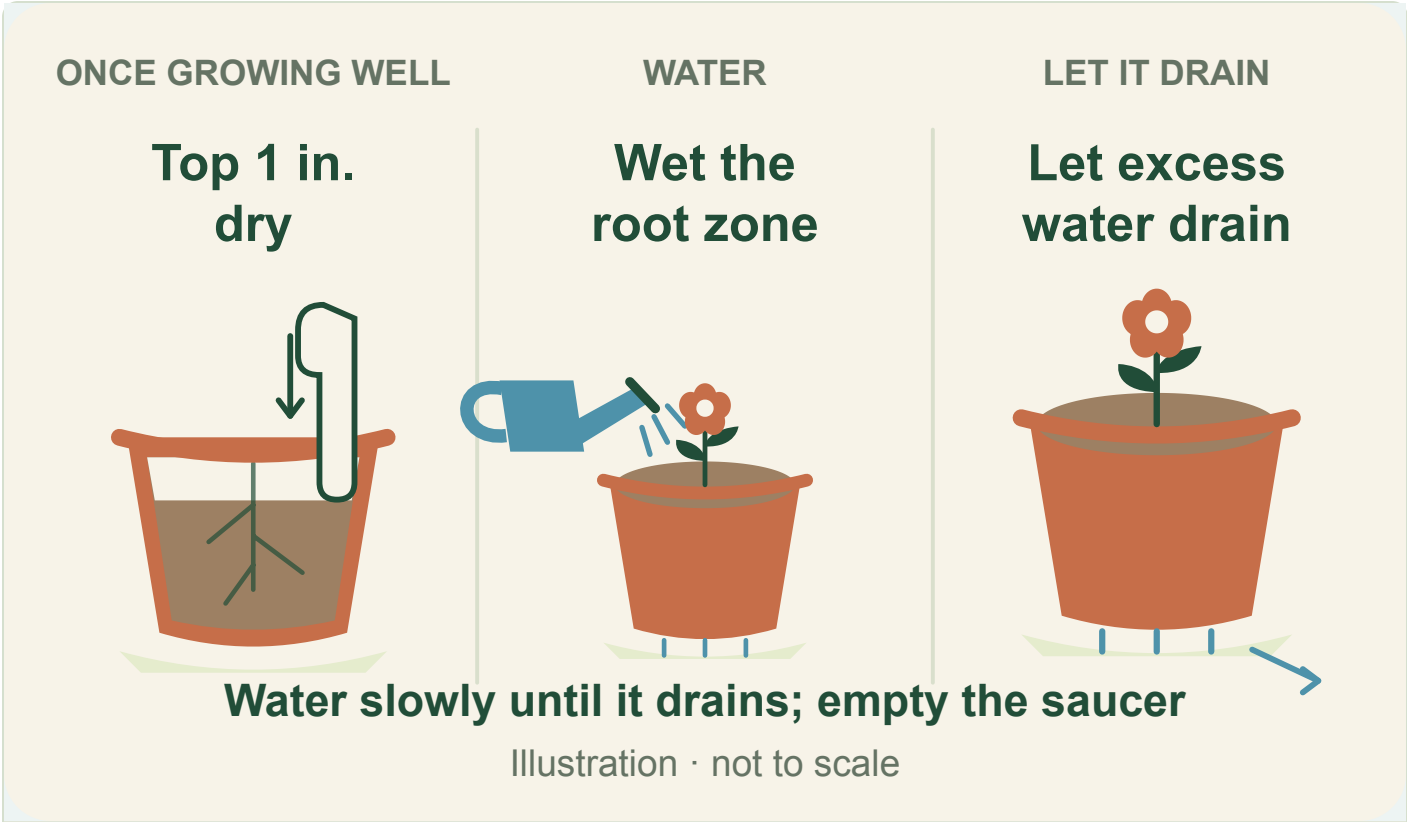
Use the purchased potting-mix bag's start point. Correct wilt or waterlogging first; use one ongoing feeding program.

Use level measuring spoons. Skip extra fertilizer at planting in the fresh enriched mix.

01 / EVERYDAY CARE

When to water.

For an established nursery plant, check each morning and water when the top inch is dry. Pour slowly onto the mix until excess drains, then empty the saucer. Recheck in hot, windy weather. If starting seeds, keep the shallow seed zone and young roots moist instead; do not wait for that top inch to dry out.



Check before watering. Established plant: check daily; water when the top inch is dry, then drain. Seeds and young roots: keep the seed zone moist. 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 fresh enriched mix listed here. Read your purchased bag for when additional feeding should begin. “Up to two months” is not a fixed waiting period for every pot; do not stack another full feeding program on top.



1 tablespoon in 1 US gallon of water Mix into water. Wet the root zone and let excess drain; the gallon is a mixing batch, not a per-pot serving. Every 14 days during active growth. Use the purchased potting-mix bag’s start point. Correct wilt or waterlogging first; use one ongoing feeding program. 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)

Once extra feeding is due and the plant is actively growing, dissolve 1 tablespoon of Miracle-Gro Water Soluble All Purpose Plant Food (US 24-8-16) in 1 US gallon of water. Apply every 14 days at the roots. Wet the root zone and let excess drain; the gallon is a mixing batch, not a serving for this pot. Correct wilt or waterlogging before feeding. Follow your purchased US package if its directions differ.

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.

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03 / WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

When to expect flowers

A budded nursery plant is the fastest route to color. Flowering from seed varies with the cultivar, so use the seed packet's estimate.

When to plant zinnias outdoors

Wait until frost risk has passed. Choose disease-resistant cultivars where summers are hot and humid.

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

Something looking off?

Why is there a white coating on the leaves?

Powdery mildew is one possibility, not a diagnosis from color alone. Check both sides of the leaves, give the plant more open air, and water the mix below the foliage. Ask local Extension if patches spread or the cause is unclear; extra fertilizer is not a treatment.

Can I grow a tall cutting zinnia in this pot?

This recipe is for one compact Zinnia elegans. Choose its mature size before its flower color. A tall cutting variety needs its own container and support plan; do not crowd several starts into this pot.

Are all zinnias native plants for my area?

No. Zinnia elegans comes from Mexico. A flower can attract pollinators without being native where you live. Use your local Extension's plant list if regional native planting is your goal.

Choosing a size and keeping flowers coming

Choose a zinnia for your space

Burpee lists Thumbelina Mix at about 6 inches tall and 10 inches wide. Our one-plant, 12-inch-pot recipe leaves room for watering; it is not a tested minimum for every zinnia. Read the mature-size tag before buying a taller cutting variety.

Check whether your zinnia needs deadheading

Give the plant bright sun, open air, and good drainage. Deadheading suits many common zinnias, while some hybrid series are bred to keep blooming without it.

Help with your next step.

Compare your first flower project

Match the starting method and space to the kind of flower pot you want.

Check the fertilizer already in your mix

Read the bag before adding another fertilizer to a new flower pot.

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: zinnia identity, varieties, and growing conditions ↗
  https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/zinnia-elegans/
- Burpee: zinnia seed-starting directions ↗
  https://support.burpee.com/support/solutions/articles/60000970065-learn-about-zinnia
- Burpee: Thumbelina container variety ↗
  https://www.burpee.com/products/zinnia-thumbelina-mix-prod000444
- Illinois Extension: container nutrition ↗
  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

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.