Repel Mosquitoes by Cultivating Marigolds

Marigolds are beautiful, strong smelling herbaceous flowers that are widely grown throughout the world. Most people grow marigolds for their season-long blooms, their beautiful scent, and because they are easy to grow. There are other great reasons to grow marigolds. The flowers are all edible though some taste better than others, and if you grow them from seed, they're beneficial for pollinators such as bees and butterflies. However, the best characteristic of marigolds is that they repel mosquitoes. This makes for an affordable and environmentally friendly alternative to chemical insecticides. Insecticides are horrible for the environment, and they cause more harm to frogs and birds, mosquitoes' main predators than they do to the mosquitoes. In the long run, this makes the mosquito problem much worse.

Marigolds Are Kryptonite to Mosquitoes

Unfortunately, mosquitoes are more than a nuisance; they are vectors for numerous diseases. For instance, malaria kills over a million people a year, and though the disease is currently not endemic to the U.S., many argue that it is only a matter of time before it becomes common in the U.S. again. Mosquitoes also spread encephalitis, West Nile virus, dengue fever and more. Instead of spending your hard earned money on chemical treatments that add to the mosquito population, in the long run, plant marigolds and other mosquito repelling plants in your yard for an immediate and cost effective solution.

More About These Remarkable Flowers

Marigolds are plants of the genus Tagetes, belonging to the family Asteraceae or Aster family. Though they are now found all over the world, botanists believe South America to be their most likely place of origin. This belief is rooted in evidence from fossils found in Argentina that date back 50 million years. Paleobotanists have discovered Asteraceae fossils that date to the Eocene Epoch (56 million to 33.9 million years ago). The plant family is from South America, and the marigold is believed to be a native of Mexico.

The name marigold is possibly derived from the Anglo-Saxon term for the flower: merso-meargealla. There are other competing claims that the name comes from the Virgin Mary, with the gold referring to the most common color of marigolds. Old English authors referred to the flower simply as golde.

Long-lasting blooms

Marigolds are beautiful flowers that bloom all season until first frost. They will bloom more profusely if you remove the dead flowers from the plant. Marigolds rarely have problems with pests. They have only a few natural enemies; of these, the most common are frost, slugs, and snails.

You can grow big marigolds, small marigolds, marigolds of many colors, even edible marigolds. The varieties of marigolds are endless.

A Wealth of Options

There are two types of marigolds that are well known and widely cultivated. These are French marigolds and African marigolds.

African marigolds are the larger of the two. African

marigolds, Tagetes erecta, typically have large yellow to orange flowers that can measure as large as 5 inches across, with plant height varying an average of 10 to 36 inches tall. African marigolds are sometimes referred to as American marigolds. (There are quite a few names for these flowers).

French marigolds are bushier and display smaller blooms. Typically, French marigolds will grow up to 2 inches across and come in a wider variety of colors: yellow, reds, orange, or multi-colored such as the harlequin French marigold with its yellow and red striped flowers.

There are other varieties of marigolds less commonly known. Such as triploid hybrids, signet marigolds, or the flavorful calendula marigolds (only the flowers are edible). Your options with marigolds are legion. Plant what you want; marigolds basically grow themselves, with almost no work on your part. Even if you believe yourself to be botanically inept, when it comes to marigolds, I believe anyone can grow them successfully.

You could buy these flowers from a store to transplant, but this is not the best way to go. Store bought flowers often have neonicotinoids applied to them at levels high enough to prove fatal to bees. You and the bees are better off if you're growing your own.

Marigolds are easy to grow; so easy in fact, that anyone can do it. You don't need great soil, just your run of the mill dirt, which is easy to come by. And you don't need to fertilize them or fuss over them. All they need is some soft ground, direct sunshine, and some water.

A One-Time Seed Purchase

Once you have decided on what variety of marigold you want to grow, you'll only need to purchase seed once. The seeds are easy to save. After you cut the dead blooms off of your

flowers a few times, you'll have all the seed you'll ever need.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKDgyM-w7u4

Getting Dirty

The next step is less work than it sounds. You'll need to loosen up the ground where you plan on planting your flowers. (Don't forget about your underground utility lines, if you don't already have your utilities marked, call 811 and get them flagged before you start digging). You can use any kind of hand tool for this, a hand tiller, shovel, etc. Once you have chosen the sites where you would like to grow your flowers (spread them out in multiple places across the yard), space the seeds apart according to your seed packet instructions. Alternately, you could grow the flowers in planters first, but this isn't a necessary step. In the case of marigolds, I think it just creates more work in the long run. Your seed packet will tell you how deep to plant the seeds, but basically, you just barely cover them with dirt. Don't let them dry out. While the plants are young, water them often, whenever the ground is dry. Don't smack the plants with water from on high; be gentle with your watering and aim for the base of your plants. Blooms should appear within a few weeks, and they will stay in bloom all season.

They Don't Ask For Much

Don't fertilize marigolds. They bloom better and more profusely in poor soil. If you fertilize them, they will bloom less, and grow excess greenery. If you don't fertilize your marigolds and they still turn out bushy with few blooms, then congratulations! These bushy marigolds should still repel mosquitoes, but this means you've got great soil in your yard; black gold if you will. This is a sign that you should grow something that is more of a challenge to grow than marigolds,

like food, or more exotic decorative plants that still repel pests.

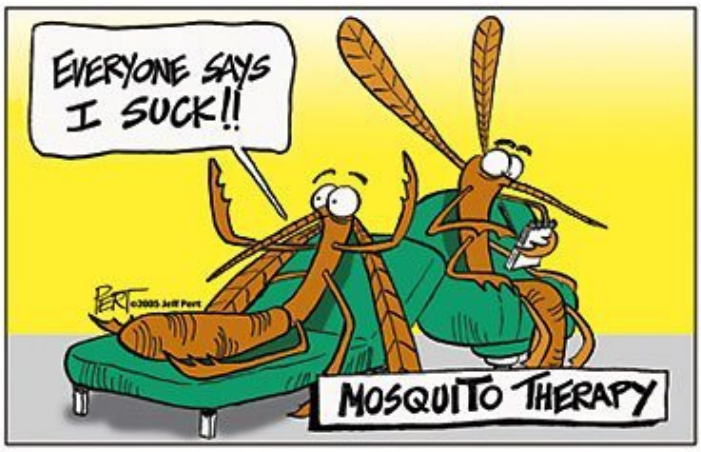
An optional extra step is to mulch the flowerbed once your flowers begin to pop out of the ground. Mulching a flowerbed makes it look more attractive and it conserves water. But you can get by without the mulch, especially when you're dealing with marigolds.

By growing these flowers in your yard, you can be assured that the mosquitos will leave you alone and you'll be helping out your local bees, too. They need all the help they can get. Sadly, it's not easy being a bee these days. Bees are relatively fragile when it comes to pesticide exposure. If you're helping out bees, you should feel good about it. They play a crucial role in the ecosystem. They are so important that biologists often refer to them as a keystone species. So by helping them out, you can feel like you're doing the planet a favor.

Other Mosquito Repelling Options

Marigolds are probably the easiest to grow, but if you want to plant a variety of plants that repel mosquitoes, consider some of the following:

- Ageratum
- Asters
- Basil
- Bee balm
- Beauty Berry
- Cadaga tree
- Catmint
- Catnip
- Cedars



- From http://taskandtoil.com

Citronella Grass

- Chrysanthemums
- Clove
- Eucalyptus
- Garlic
- Geranium (repels ticks)
- Horsemint
- Lavender (also repels ticks, moths, mice, black flies and fleas)
- Lemon Balm
- Lemon Grass (repels ticks)
- Lemon Thyme
- Lemon Verbena
- Mint
- Nodding Onion
- Peppermint
- Penny Royal
- Pineapple weed
- Pitcher Plant
- Pyrethrum daisies
- Rosemary
- Stone root
- Snowbrush
- Sweet Fern

- Tansy
- Tea Tree
- Vanilla Leaf
- Vetiver Grass
- Wild Bergamot
- Wormwood

When purchasing seeds, you'll probably get a much better deal ordering from a catalog or an online seed company than you would from your local retail store. In our garden we've come to rely on Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds. They have over a dozen varieties of marigolds to choose from.

Conclusion

Even if you struggle to grow plants and have had limited prior success, you can grow marigolds, no matter how many plants have perished under your care. Please let us know how your marigold cultivation turns out!

Recommended Reading:

- *Invasive Weeds You Can, and Should, Be Eating – Easy Foraging*
- *How to Regrow Your Favorite Herbs and Save Lots of Money*
- *Healing Allergy Inflammation With Stinging Nettle*

Sources:

- *11 Plants That repel Mosquitoes* – Natural Living Ideas
- *Marigolds* – Iowa State University Horticulture Home & Pest News
- *Marigolds* – The Old Farmer's Almanac
- *Asteraceae Plant Family* – Encyclopedia Britannica
- *31 Plants That Repel Mosquitoes* – Best Plants