

Snapdragon

Common Names Snapdragon, dog's mouth, lion's mouth, toad's mouth

Mature Size: 6"-48" tall and 8"-10" Wide

Season: Tender perennial

USDA Zones: 7-10

Bloom Season: July to October

Light: Full sun to partial shade

Soil: Well-draining

Description

Everybody loves snapdragons – old-fashioned, cool-season annuals that produce spikes of long-lasting, sweet-smelling blooms in every color of the rainbow, except blue. Once established, snapdragons are remarkably self-sufficient, but planting snapdragon seeds can be tricky. Want to try your hand at seed-grown snapdragons? Read on to learn the basics of snapdragon seed propagation.

When to Plant Snap Dragon Seeds

When planting snapdragon seeds, the optimum time to start snapdragon seeds indoors is about six to ten weeks before the last frost in spring. Snapdragons are slow-starters that germinate best in cool temperatures. Some gardeners have good luck planting snapdragon seeds directly in the garden. The best time for this is after the last hard frost in spring, as snapdragons can tolerate light frost.

How to Sow Snapdragon Seeds

- Sow snapdragon seeds indoors **12 weeks before last frost** using a seed starting kit.
- Sow seeds thinly and barely press into seed starting formula do not cover with soil.
- Keep the soil **moist at 65 degrees**, as snapdragons prefer cooler soil so **do not use bottom heat**.
- Seedlings emerge in 8-14 days.
- As soon as the seedlings emerge, provide plenty of light on a sunny windowsill or grow seedlings 3-4 inches beneath fluorescent plant lights turned on 16 hours per day, off for 8 hours at night. Raise the lights as the plants grow taller. Incandescent bulbs will not work for this process because they will get too hot. Most plants require a dark period to grow, do not leave lights on for 24 hours.
- Thin to one seedling per cell when they have two sets of leaves.
- To encourage better branching, pinch the tops off when the seedlings reach 3-4 inches tall.

- Seedlings do not need much fertilizer, feed when they are 3-4 weeks old using a starter solution (half strength of a complete indoor houseplant food) according to manufacturer's directions.
- Transplant hardened-off seedlings to the garden after the last heavy frost. Snapdragons can tolerate light frost.
- Before planting in the garden, seedling plants need to be "hardened off". Accustom young plants to outdoor conditions by moving them to a sheltered place outside for a week. Be sure to protect them from wind and hot sun at first. If frost threatens at night, cover or bring containers indoors, then take them out again in the morning. This hardening off process toughens the plant's cell structure and reduces transplant shock and scalding.

How To Grow Snapdragons

- **Keep weeds under control during the snapdragon growing season.** Weeds compete with plants for water, space and nutrients, so control them by either cultivating often or use a mulch to prevent their seeds from germinating.
- moisture and maintain even soil temperatures. For annuals an organic mulch of shredded leaves lends a natural look to the bed and will improve the soil as it breaks down in time. Always keep mulches off a plant's stems to prevent possible rot.
- Keep plants well-watered during the growing season, especially during dry spells. Plants need about 1 inch of rain per week during the growing season. Use a rain gauge to check to see if you need to add water. It's best to water with a drip or trickle system that delivers water at low pressure at the soil level. If you water with overhead sprinklers, water early in the day so the foliage has time to dry off before evening, to minimize disease problems. Keep the soil moist but not saturated.
- Until plants become established, some protection from extreme winds and direct, hot sunlight may be necessary. Good air movement is also important.
- After new growth appears, a light fertilizer may be applied. Keep granular fertilizers away from the plant crown and foliage to avoid burn injury. Use low rates of a slow release fertilizer, as higher rates may encourage root rots.
- **Taller varieties may require staking.**
- Remove spent flower spikes to encourage flowering and prevent seed development. Pinching the growing tips of plants can encourage bushiness. Snapdragons make terrific cut flowers, and cutting the flowers encourages new blooms.
- Monitor for pests and diseases. Check with your local Cooperative Extension Service for pest controls recommended for your area.
- Remove plants after they are killed by frost in fall to avoid disease issues the following year.

Growing Tips

- Snapdragons bloom best in well-drained, moist soil, in cool late-spring or early-summer temperatures. They can tolerate light shade but bloom much better in full sun.

- Snapdragons tend to stop producing flowers when hot weather arrives, but they will usually re-bloom when the weather cools off in late summer if you cut back the spent flower stalks.
- Snapdragons are available in a broad range of heights, so they may be used in many ways in the garden. Small cultivars work well as an annual ground cover, as an edging, or in pots or window boxes. The spiky form of taller cultivars adds an attractive accent to annual and mixed borders.
- Tall snapdragon cultivars also make remarkably long-lasting cut flowers.