

Flowers to Start Seeding in February

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Emma Alexander ([G_Alexander](#)) February 11, 2015

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You can't wait until spring, here are five flowers to start from seed in February

One of the joys of seed catalogs cramming our mailboxes every January is sure to get gardeners excited for the New Year. But many long, gray weeks separate our shopper's thrill from the excitement of spring planting. How to fill the gap? Of course there is planning to be done, but if you're lucky, a stack of garden books received as holiday gifts to be read before the spring. If you're itching to get your fingers dirty, you can start some flowers indoors as early as possible. Of course, the best planting dates for where you live depend on your precise last frost date, so you can [look it up here](#) on Dave's Garden. Based on my average last frost date of April 6, here are five of my favorite flowers to start in February.

Delphinium

Beautiful classics of the English garden can be direct-sown in the fall. But if you missed the chance last autumn, you can start Delphinium seeds indoors eight to ten weeks before the last frost date. This year I'm going to try the deep blue 'Cultorum King Arthur' variety I bought on Amazon from Butchart Gardens. Allow three weeks for germination, and don't be too disappointed if the seeds fail to sprout or seedlings don't survive. Delphiniums are notoriously hard to start from seed. If your late winter Delphinium sowing efforts pay off, feel free to brag. Make sure you have a spot in full sun waiting for them when you plant them out after the last frost, and don't forget they are heavy feeders.



Heliotrope

In the Victorian garden, Heliotrope likes more sun and a longer season than most northern gardens can provide, but their deep purple color and vanilla scent are worth the extra effort it takes to enjoy them in cooler climates. Heliotrope seeds can be started indoors three to five weeks before last frost and may take a month or more to germinate. Keep the temperature of your potting mixture close to 65-75 degrees Fahrenheit for best results. Like the Delphinium, the germination rate for Heliotrope can be very low; sow extra to make sure you have enough flowers. Unlike Delphinium, which will germinate in the dark, Heliotrope requires light to germinate. Wait until all danger of frost has passed before planting these out.

Milkweed

The common *Asclepias syriaca* is critical for the survival of the Monarch butterfly, but has been eliminated from many habitats. There are many different varieties native to different parts of the United States. The easiest way to sow milkweed is to simply scatter the seeds where you want them to grow, since they require cold stratification. But if you wrap them in a moist paper towel inside of a plastic bag now and put them in the refrigerator for about a month, you can sow the seeds outdoors in late spring.

Antirrhinum

The name, *Antirrhinum*, means "like a snout," but the common name Snapdragon captures the appeal of these colorful flowers much better. These favorites for children's gardens can be started indoors six to eight weeks before last frost. Dwarf varieties can be started a

r. Don't cover the seeds when you plant them, and don't wait to see sprouts before using lights; like Heliotrope, snapdragon seeds n't to germinate. Allow two to three weeks for germination. Snapdragons are tender perennials, which mean that you can plant t a little sooner than many annuals. Start plenty of seeds now and then go ahead and risk a frost to get color in your garden a two early.

ea, garden centers started filling up with flats of violas and pansies ready to plant out in January. But if you want to grow a very or unusual variety, you'll have to start yours from seed. Violas flower in cooler weather and stop when things start to heat up. To ough time to enjoy the blossoms before these early spring flowers give up, you should start your seeds up to twelve weeks before t. Germination should occur within two weeks. A hard frost or snowfall could kill them, but you can plant them out without fear of it--just be sure to harden off your seedlings before planting them outdoors.

ng off before plant outdoors is a good idea for all seedlings started indoors, even the ones that won't go outside until after all of frost has past. Outside of perhaps Florida or Arizona, the "sunny window" so often recommended for seedlings does not provide light for healthy seedling growth. Grow lights are required for plants started this early in the year.

re just a few of my favorites, and may not work in every region at this time of year. What are your favorite flowers to start from the depths of winter? What other February garden activities keep your green thumbs active?

Gemma Alexander

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KyWoods • a month ago

That's good to know about putting milkweed seeds in the fridge--I'm glad I'm not too late!

Hoity • a month ago

I did an experiment with my old delphinium seed from 2006, 2008 & 2012. I put the seeds in the freezer for 24 hrs., then into a damp coffee filter/ baggie & left in my kitchen window . It was behind the blind so it was quite cool. 4 days later I had seeds sprouting. Every one of them germinated within the week.

I have always had trouble germinating heliotrope seeds so this time I tried the filter/baggie and placed near a heat register. After a week I had seeds sprouting. I have found if you wait til the green cotyledons appear before transferring to soil, they will continue to grow, but if you move them just as the root appears, they die on me.

FlyPoison • a day ago

Thanks for the milkweed tip. Hopefully my germination success will get even better!

P