

# THE SIMPLE THINGS

PLANT LIBRARY

## NIGELLA

GREAT  
FOR A VASE  
INDOORS

Ethereal blooms above  
a tangle of leaves

ILLUSTRATION: SARA MULVANNY. WORDS: CLARE GOGERTY



## NIGELLA

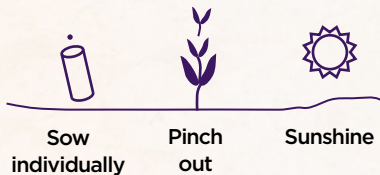
This easy-to-grow annual was popularised by formidable plantswoman Gertrude Jekyll (1843-1932). No slouch when it came to plants, she saw the potential of its paper-thin flowers framed by filigree foliage to pep up cottage-garden borders – gorgeous for a long season, when other plants start to look bedraggled. Also known rather dreamily as love-in-a-mist, Nigella is great when left to go to seed: its spiky, bulbous seed heads add an exotic flourish to flower arrangements.

### Need to know

Although it self-seeds prolifically, Nigella often cross-breeds and changes colour. If you want to keep your original hue – generally from a palette of blues, pinks and whites – sow fresh seed or harvest seed pods carefully (see below).

### How to grow

Nigella flourishes in a sunny, sheltered spot. Seed can be sown either in spring for late-summer flowers or now for blooms earlier next year. If you sow now, do so in pots or trays and keep protected over winter. Scatter seeds meanly and thin plants when 2-3cm tall. After flowering, pick seed pods before they split and hang upside down in a cool, dark place, then you'll have seeds ready to sow next spring.



**Nigella 'Green Pod':** soft blue flowers followed by whopping seedpods. 200 seeds, £1.95; [sarahraven.com](http://sarahraven.com).

**Nigella papillosa 'African Bride':** white blooms with purple-black stamens. Bee-friendly, too. Packet of seeds, £1.95; [chilternseeds.co.uk](http://chilternseeds.co.uk).

**Nigella damascena alba 'Miss Jekyll White':** ivory flowers with green stamens. 800 seeds, £1.25; [seedaholic.com](http://seedaholic.com).

