



## Cape Jewels Planting Guide

### About Cape Jewels

A brightly colored annual that is native to South Africa, these beauties are a great choice for borders, baskets, and even mass plantings reaching up to just two feet tall at maturity. Cape Jewels, or *Nemesia*, has been compared to pansies, snapdragons and even orchids in shape and appearance. Gardeners in cold-winter climates can seed directly into their garden for summer blooms, or start them indoors for an earlier jump. Gardeners in warm-winter climates can seed directly into the garden in spring or fall.

### When to Plant

Sow *Nemesia* seeds indoors six to eight weeks before the last frost in your area. If planting directly outdoors, do so only when temperatures have consistently reached 60°F.

### Where to Plant

Choose a partially shaded area of the garden with rich, moist soil and adequate drainage. Cape Jewels will grow best in full sunlight, however, in warmer climates, these plants may bloom longer if they receive afternoon shade. Placing a layer of organic mulch will help insulate the roots from any temperature extremes as well as help the soil retain moisture.

### How to Plant

Use a starter soil and make sure to sow the flower seeds on the surface of the soil. Gently firm down the soil but only lightly cover the seeds. Keep the soil moist but not overly wet. Avoid letting the soil dry out completely, as this can cause poor germination. Do not exclude light as the seeds require it for germination. Place the seed tray in a bright location, such as near a window, but avoid exposing it to direct sunlight.

When the seedlings are large enough to handle, transplant them into individual three-inch pots filled with potting soil. Grow the seedlings in cooler conditions, such as an open greenhouse or a cool windowsill. Gradually acclimate the young seedlings to outdoor conditions by placing them outside for short periods of time. Increase the amount of time they spend outside each day until they are ready to be transplanted into the garden.

As the seedlings grow, pinch back the tips of the stems one or two times to encourage compact growth and bushier plants. Once all risk of frost has passed, transplant the seedlings into the garden. Space them six inches apart to allow for proper growth and airflow.

For gardeners in warmer climates, you can directly sow Cape Jewels seeds outdoors in prepared beds when the danger of frost has passed. Thin the seedlings to six inches apart once they have emerged.

### Caring for Cape Jewels

Cape Jewels plants grow best in cooler temperatures. In areas that have milder summer temperatures, they can be expected to bloom from late spring until the first frost of the year. In hotter climates, they will perform best in early spring or fall, dying back to some degree in the full heat of summer. If planted in a frost-free location, Cape Jewels work well as winter annuals.

Be careful not to overwater, even though they benefit from moist soil. Too much water may cause stem rot.