



Growing Ranunculus

Woohoo! You've just started the journey to growing your very own ranunculus. If you look in your Dogwood bag and see small, shriveled brown octopi, then no worries - that's exactly what ranunculus corms are supposed to look like before planting! Let's take a quick look at the basics of how to grow these little buggers into big, beautiful blooms.

Materials:

- Pots (any size, ranunculus can be planted alone or in a group)
- Light source
- Planting medium (i.e. potting mix, garden soil, seed starting mix)
- Water

Timing: Ranunculus are cool-loving flowers. This means that they bloom in late spring to early summer in Wisconsin. They are most productive when daytime temps are between 50-60*. They are not perennial in our climate, which means they won't survive our winters. They can be started indoors and then transplanted outside when they aren't in danger of falling below 26°F. On a flower farm, we protect them at lower temperatures by covering our plants with frost cloth at night. For the home gardener, we recommend growing ranunculus in pots where they can easily be moved inside if we get a cold snap in the spring. Otherwise, having a sheet ready to throw on your outdoor beds is another option.

How to start corms the Dogwood way:

Calculate your timing:

- Start by finding your last average frost date for your zip code. For Dogwood, this is May 8th. This also happens to be when our daytime temps are between 50-60* - perfect ranunculus blooming weather!
- Ranunculus start blooming anywhere from 12-16 weeks after planting. Count backwards 12 weeks from your last frost date to find your presoaking date. In southeastern Wisconsin, this is in mid-February.

Pre-soak your corms:

- Ranunculus are stored dry until they are planted. This means they have gone a very long time without water! Give your little octopi a nice long drink to prepare them for planting by submerging them in a bucket of cool water for 3-4 hours. Bonus points if you soak them in a compost tea solution and add some oxygen (fish tank bubblers can do the trick!). If you don't know how to make compost tea, don't have a bubbler or simply don't have the time, then that's okay! Your ranunculus will just be grateful for a nice long drink of plain tap water.

Plant in pots:

- Fill a pot about half way with planting media (potting mix, soil, seed starting mix, etc.). Nestle your plump, little octopi into their pots and cover them with about 2" of soil. Their little tentacles should be pointing down into the dirt. Water them until they are moist but not wet. Do not water them again unless the dirt is dry to the touch.

Give them light: Place your pots in full sun (such as a southern window) or under grow lights and watch them send up shoots!

Water: Ranunculus need minimal water until they are leafed up and planted outside. They prefer moist soil once they are growing, but do not like soggy or wet soil.

Move them outside:

- Ranunculus do great in containers outdoors, but can also be planted into the ground. Each ranunculus needs about 6" of space, whether in the garden or in a pot. Remember, the leaves will die if they are exposed to temps below 26* at night. This means watching your local weather and deciding when to begin hardening these plants off for planting.
- Hardening off is the process in which you allow the plant to slowly get used to the chilly outside temps compared to their warm indoor environment. Start by putting your pots outside for an hour per day when the temps are above 30* or so and increasing that time slowly by about an hour per day over the next two weeks. At Dogwood, this is generally in mid-March. Remember: your tender ranunculus will need to be moved back inside anytime the daytime or nighttime temps drop below 26*!
- Finally, after they have gotten used to being outside during the day in the chilly weather for a few weeks, and the night time temps are not dropping below 26*, you can plant your little ranunculus outside in pots or in the ground. Be prepared to cover them with an old bedsheet overnight in case of a late cold snap.
- Now, watch your little plants grow into robust garden workhorses! By your last frost date, your ranunculus should be sending up flower shoots.

Deadhead/Harvest:

- When you see your first beautiful bud, resist the urge to leave it on the plant! Grab a pair of clippers or scissors and cut it. Harvesting ranunculus to bring indoors accomplishes two things: it brightens up your home (with a fantastic vase life of 10 days!) while also encouraging your plant to continue to produce blooms.
- Ranunculus are always trying to complete their life cycle (i.e. reproduce). Plants develop flowers to create seeds. If we keep cutting the flowers, ranunculus will continue to work to produce more until the daytime temps get too hot for them.
- Cut your ranunculus at the base of the flower stem at the 'marshmallow' stage to get its best vase life. This is when the flower head feels plush and spongy like a marshmallow when squeezed between two fingers. Cut too early or too late? No worries, your flower will still be beautiful. Place in fresh water with flower food and enjoy your ruffley harvest!

Follow along with Dogwood Farms as we grow flowers this season:

Questions? Email us at
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