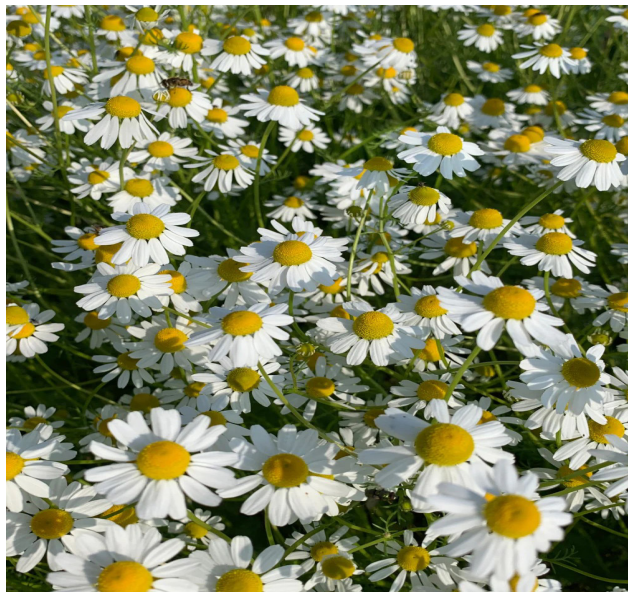


CHAMOMILE

Matricaria chamomilla
Member of Asteraceae family

**History**

Chamomile originated from southern and eastern Europe as well as western Asia. Its historical use for medicinal purposes dates back to 1550 B.C.E. The term “chamomile” is rooted in both French and Latin, meaning ‘earth apple’, describing its low-growing nature and apple-like fragrance.

Climate Needs

Chamomile can be grown in zones from 4-9. This plant prefers sun but will tolerate some shade. It is a resilient plant that can survive night temperatures as low as 14°F. The best climate for chamomile is long warm days and cool nights. It is important to irrigate as needed to maintain upper soil moisture levels without causing waterlogging, as the plants are shallow-rooted.

Risk

While generally considered a low-risk plant, chamomile does pose certain challenges. It has the potential to reseed itself aggressively. Additionally, chamomile is susceptible to aphids.

Chamomile Description

Belonging to the daisy family, chamomile comes in two varieties: German or wild chamomile and the shorter Roman, English, or garden chamomile. With stems reaching up to 2 feet, the plant features a shallow, spreading root system and long, narrow leaves growing up to 3 inches. Each stem showcases a central cone adorned with bright golden yellow tubular florets surrounded by white flowers.

To maintain this compact, dense, and bushy appearance, it is advisable to trim chamomile plants several times throughout the growing season, as they tend to become leggy over time.

Soil

Chamomile thrives in well-drained sandy-loam soils with a pH close to 7, yet it can adapt to poorly drained soils. However, it is important to note chamomile does not fare well in waterlogged conditions.

Seeding

Chamomile is propagated solely from seed, either sown directly in the garden in the fall or shortly before the last frost date or started indoors 6-8 weeks prior to the last frost date for later transplantation.

Surface sow the seeds and lightly press them into the soil, as they require light to germinate. Germination typically occurs within a week under warm conditions. To avoid transplant issues, grow larger plants individually in containers or transplant them when small. Plants can self-seed unless flower heads are removed. Chamomile grows rapidly and usually begins to flower in as little as ten weeks.

CROP PROFILE



Fertility

Chamomile does fine in nutrient-deficient soils, requiring minimal fertilizer.

Weed Control

Chamomile struggles in competition with weeds. It is crucial to maintain a weed-free environment for seedlings and young plants.

Pest & Disease Managment

Aphids are typically the only pests that bother chamomile.

Harvest

Chamomile flowers bloom in early to midsummer, ripening until late summer or until frost if deadheaded. Regular harvesting and dead-heading encourage further flowering. Harvest near full bloom for the best quality, snipping just beneath the flower head.

Collect seeds to grow new plants or let them self-seed, moving seedlings to your preferred site if needed.

German chamomile is an annual, dying off after setting seed.

Cleaning & Storage

Chamomile is best preserved in dried form. To achieve this, lay out chamomile flowers on a tray in a single layer, positioning them in a warm, dry location away from direct sunlight for one to two weeks. You can also use a dehydrator. Once completely dried, store them in an airtight container in a cool, dark place. These dried flowers serve as potpourri, herbal pillows, and teas.

Highlights

Chamomile proves to be a valuable addition not only to gardens but also to lawns, with the ornamental cultivar ‘Treneague’ being particularly well-suited for this purpose. Planting this variety as plugs, spaced approximately 4 inches apart, enhances the lawn’s visual appeal. While regular weeding is essential for robust growth, the mentioned cultivar eliminates the need for clipping, simplifying maintenance.

CROP PROFILE

Rating any crop’s production opportunity or risk is subjective and depends on the region where the crop is to be raised. Genetic advancement for pathogen tolerance and adverse weather condition has been more significant for popular, high seed sales crops such as corn and soybeans. The table below lists some of the issues of producing specific crops and helps guide your process of selecting your cropping choice.

Average rating: 4.07					
Issue	1	2	3	4	5
Seed availability					X
Scouting requirements					X
Drought tolerance				X	
Waterlogged soil tolerance			X		
Disease pressure				X	
Wildlife concerns					X
Yield swings				X	
Harvest ability				X	
Field loss					X
Market demand				X	
Soil regeneration			X		
Residue value			X		
Storability					X
Benefit for following crop			X		

1- very low 2- low 3- average 4- moderately high 5- very high

- Seed availability** – Price, lead time, and required lot size are considerations for these issues
- Scouting requirements** – What frequency does someone need to look at the crop?
- Drought tolerance** – Rainfall patterns are requiring crops go longer between rainfall events.
- Waterlogged soil tolerance** – Rainfall events tend to produce higher volumes than historical averages.
- Disease pressure** – Plant stress has increased with the rise of daytime temperatures
- Wildlife concerns** – Deer, rabbits, voles, resident geese, and others can destroy fragile crops.
- Yield swings** – How predictable will the income be when this crop goes to market?
- Harvest ability** – Do we need plans B & C if adverse conditions affect the harvest?
- Field loss** – How much will be left in the field and can we monetize field loss?
- Market demand** – Does this crop have an elastic delivery window and are there timing penalties?
- Profitability** – Is there potential for higher margins needed for a shrinking land base?
- Soil regeneration** – Does this crop support the next crop?
- Residue value** – What remains after the target crop? Can we monetize the residue?
- Storability** – How long can we hold this crop? Will quality be challenging to maintain?