

## Cineraria

### History

The name “cineraria” is from the Latin word for “ashy.” *Cineraria cruentus* was originally a perennial native of the Canary Islands. In 1772, Francis Masson, an English explorer from the Royal Botanical Gardens, went to the Canary Islands and collected wild plants. After much modification and hybridization of *Senico cruentus* and *Senico heritieri*, we now have many varieties and hybrids that are commonly called cinerarias.

### Description

Cinerarias are short-stemmed, woolly herbaceous perennials that are treated as annuals. They have large, down-covered, heart-shaped leaves with a rich green color on the upper side and purple underneath.

Starry, daisy-like flowers in spectacular, rounded, dense clusters often bloom so profusely that they cover the foliage above which they rise. These blooms come in a wide variety of incredible colors including shades and combinations of whites, pinks, roses, purples and blues. This explains why this rich, old-fashioned plant is enjoying a substantial comeback in the industry today.

### Light

When cinerarias are grown indoors, an east, west, or south window (or artificial lights of 100 foot-candles or more) can provide the required light to maximize plant quality and flower development. Lower light levels can cause pale, irregularly colored flowers, particularly on darker varieties.

### Temperature

For best longevity, cool temperatures of 13° C are the key and should be maintained. Plants may be placed on a 7° to 13° C porch at night but should not be allowed to go below 7° C . Cineraria can withstand slightly higher temperatures, but excessive heat can decrease their life span.

### Water

When plants are in bloom, they need to stay consistently moist without water being allowed to stand in the saucer. As plants develop and come into bloom, they can be kept slightly drier. They do well with average indoor humidity and should not be misted. If plants are allowed to dry out or are watered too much, they will not thrive.

### Soil

Plants will do best in a loose, peat-based potting soil. Young plants can be fertilized every other week with a water-soluble or liquid fertilizer at half strength until they begin to bud. Plants already in bloom should not be fertilized at all.

### Value

Cinerarias that are more commonly raised as potted houseplants are enjoyed for several weeks and then composted. Perhaps their best value is as Easter and Mother’s Day gifts for their bursts of vibrant color that brighten the dreary gloom of winter and say, “I love you.”

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