French Marigold Growing Calendar and Pet and Skin Safety Checklist

FitInFlow.space · Tagetes patula · Based on NC State Extension, UW–Madison Extension, RHS, UF/IFAS and Pet Poison Helpline. Updated October 2026.

1. Growing calendar (fill in your dates)

When	Task	My date
8 weeks before last frost	Sow indoors at about 70°F (21°C)	
1 week before planting	Harden off seedlings a few hours a day outside	
After last frost (soil above 65°F)	Plant out 6–12 in apart, or sow direct	
When plants are 4–6 in tall	Pinch growing tips for bushier plants	
Early summer to fall, weekly	Deadhead faded flowers (wear gloves)	
Late season	Leave a few heads to dry; save seed	
First frost	Pull plants and compost them	

2. Care quick reference

Light	Soil	Water	Feeding	Hardiness
Full sun, 6–8 hours	Well-drained, average; pH about 6–7	Evenly moist; water at the base	Light only; too much cuts flowers	Frost-tender annual (RHS H2)

3. Problem fixer

You see	Likely cause	Fix
Leggy stems, few flowers	Not enough sun	Move to the sunniest spot
White powder on leaves	Powdery mildew	Space plants, water at the base
Grey fuzzy mold, rotting	Botrytis or rot from wet soil	Improve drainage, remove affected parts
Fine webbing, speckled leaves	Spider mites (hot, dry weather)	Hose off leaves, check often
Seedlings eaten overnight	Slugs and snails	Protect young plants

4. Which marigold is which?

French	African / Aztec	Signet	Pot marigold (calendula)
Tagetes patula. Compact, pungent. Edging, pots, nematode cover crop.	Tagetes erecta. Tall pompoms. Day of the Dead, garlands, lutein.	Tagetes tenuifolia. Lacy, tiny flowers. Grown for edible petals.	Calendula officinalis. Not a Tagetes. Skin creams; considered non-toxic to pets.

5. Pet and skin safety checklist

- [ ] Gloves on for deadheading and pulling plants; wash hands afterwards
- [ ] Keep sap off broken skin and off skin that will be in the sun (sap + sunlight can blister)
- [ ] Pots out of reach of cats and dogs (Tagetes: mild stomach upset; sap irritates skin)
- [ ] Daisy-family or arnica allergy? Avoid handling, or wear gloves and long sleeves
- [ ] No tagetes essential oil at home: EU safe limit is 0.01% in leave-on products, none in sunscreens
- [ ] Not used as a home remedy, tea or skin treatment

Pet ate a lot, or seems unwell? Call your vet or ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435.

Rash that blisters, spreads, or comes with swelling or breathing trouble? Get medical care.

For information only, not medical or veterinary advice.