



Cannas are herbaceous perennials native to the northern and southern hemisphere. Cannas do well in most areas of the United States, flourishing with plenty of heat and water. Cannas are very dependable; easy to plant and easy to grow. Cannas offer showy, tropical color from early summer until frost.

Planting:

Cannas may be planted in the spring after danger from hard frost. In zone 7 we recommend planting from late March to late April. Adjust this guideline to your zone. Before spring planting, soil can be amended with compost, manure and a high nitrogen fertilizer. Best results are achieved when planted in a loose, fertile and well-draining soil that has warmed to at least 60 degrees. Cannas will tolerate a wide range of growing conditions. Cannas love full sun and require a minimum of four hours of direct sunlight.

Plant rhizomes 12 to 18 inches apart. Lay the long part of the rhizome horizontal to the earth's surface with eye up, if visible. This is not critical, as cannas will grow no matter which direction they are planted. Cannas are best planted in shallow, warm ground covered with just about two inches of soil.

In colder regions, (6-8 weeks before spring), bulbs can be planted in pots and placed in greenhouse conditions. When danger of frost is past, remove from pot and plant outside.

Cultivate often to keep soil loose and free of weeds.

Summer Care:

Cannas should be watered thoroughly once a week by slowly soaking the area around roots. Cannas are heavy feeders. For added performance apply 5-10-5 or 10-10-10 fertilizer two or three times during the growing season. Organic matter turned into the soil, such as composted manure, will provide a great benefit as well. Although cannas will continue to bloom if not dead-headed, cutting old spent flowers and seed pods will make them prettier and neater in the garden.

Leaf feeding insects and leaf rolling caterpillars can be stopped by regular applications of systemic insecticide products. Look for an active ingredient of 97.4% Acephate. Specific product names include Ortho Systemic Insect Killer and Orthene 97 Soluble Insecticide. A natural product is Garlic Barrier Insect Repellent which is also systemic. It is best to treat cannas very early in the season to control canna leaf rollers. Be certain to apply the systemic insecticide to the soil near your cannas as well as the foliage.

Overwintering:

Cannas multiply producing 3 to 5 new rhizomes for each one planted. Dig clumps of bulbs in the late fall or after the first frost for re-planting the following spring. The most common mistake is allowing the canna rhizomes to dry out too much while in storage. Two methods of storage are:

1. Remove old stalks, leave bulbs in clump with soil intact. Pile clumps and cover with plastic and store in basement, cellar, cool corner of a garage, crawl space, etc. Never store in mesh bags that will allow rhizomes to become too dry.
2. Rhizomes can be washed, divided, and layered with peat moss in cardboard boxes with lids or in plastic bags. A few air holes around the sides with help give a small amount of needed air flow. Store in a basement or other cool place such as a cool corner of a garage, under the house, cellar, etc.

Rhizomes must not be allowed to freeze during storage. The ideal storage temperature is 50 degrees.

IN SOUTHERN STATES (zone 7-10) where the ground does not freeze below four to six inches, cannas can be left in the ground all winter. Cut foliage down to the ground and, if needed, cover flowerbed with six to twelve inches of grass clippings, leaves, compost, hay straw, etc. Cannas can be thinned in the spring every two to three years by digging out thick areas of bulbs to allow spacing between the plants.