



TAGETE

Fam. Asteraceae

DESCRIPTION

Herbaceous annual plants, generally with an erect habit, though some species are bushy. Some horticultural species and hybrids are grown in borders and flower beds, with simple flower heads – similar to those of daisies – or double – similar to carnation flowers.

LEAVES

Deeply separated, shiny, oval, sharp and alternate, the leaves are slightly jagged and intense green.

FRUITS

Ribbed or striated achenes; in most species, there is a pappus.

HABITAT

The Tagetes are native to Mexico, the southwestern United States and South America. The marigold was introduced in Europe in the 14th century, mainly from Mexico. The genus includes about 30 perennial species in the places of origin, however, Italians consider them annual, as they come from tropical or subtropical areas. Marigold is also known as “Carnation of India”.

DISTRIBUTION

Widely cultivated also in Europe, in Italy they are considered annual plants – they are sown when the temperatures are quite high, in mid-spring, and can last until October-November, before withering.

FLOWERS

The flowers are not fragrant but rather have a pungent smell; in fact, odourless varieties have been selected. On the other hand, they are very beautiful and the plant lends itself to ornamental purposes, both in gardens and pots. They have a multi-petal corolla with lively shades of yellow and orange.

STEM

Straight, bushy and densely branched at the top.

INTERESTING FACTS

In many countries (e.g. in France and Germany) its flowers are used to enhance the taste of cold vegetables and salads. Leaves and flower heads are also commonly used for flavouring oil, vinegar or other condiments. Marigold plants are also grown in gardens as natural pesticides, especially in organic or synergistic ones. The marigold is also mistakenly known as Carnation of India, in reference to South American Indians – Native Americans. Its flowers are gaudy, with hues ranging from yellow to deep red.

ROOTS

Robust rhizomatous root system that generates densely branched stems.

