

**THE BOTANIC NURSERY ATWORTH  
WILTSHIRE SN12 8NU**



**ALCEA – The HOLLYHOCK**



The Halo series are a new generation of perennial Hollyhocks, a wonderful addition to the range of summer flowering hardy garden plants. They are descended from species originally introduced from Turkey and Kurdistan; which are known to be largely resistant to rust, a fungal infection the older sorts sometimes suffer from. If you already grow hollyhocks and they are plagued with rust, save seed from your favourites and grow on replacements. Remove and burn all parts of the old ones and occasionally spray replacements with a rose fungicide. (Following the instructions)



Or you can buy something new from our range of plugs, or larger plants, as available.

Young hollyhocks can be planted to flower in their first year if started early enough and will flower for succeeding years.



Hollyhocks like to grow in an open sunny site or lightly shaded position. They don't require or particularly like rich soils and they especially dislike manure or additional organic matter. Once established they do not require any artificial watering.

**SEED TIPS**



Hollyhocks are members of the Malvaceae family. Seed can be sown from January to September, from April onwards no heat is required and they should be kept outside protected from heavy rain. It is more efficient to sow one or two seeds into individual cells, using a proprietary seed compost, germination will take around 7-14 days. Protect them from rodents, some wire is usually sufficient, or sow directly into the ground in the border or cracks in the paving to about 1cm deep. Some sorts will flower first year from seed later sowings from June to September will produce plants that will flower the following year. When sowing direct into the garden or path edges its worth marking with a label or stick so you can see where they will be, these sowings can take longer to germinate. Seed you have saved yourself from your favourite plant will germinate better if soaked in water for just a short time, up to an hour to soften the outer circular casing. Seed that you buy usually has the outer casing removed resembling a kidney like shape, does not need this intervention.



## HISTORY

The Hollyhock is believed to have been cultivated 3,000 years ago, Assyrian Kings created vast gardens featuring plants from the lands they conquered.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> Century painting 'The Garden of Paradise' in the hortus conclusus Hollyhocks feature in a range of colours. The story of the Hollyhock in English gardens begins in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and is recorded as having been first introduced to the court of King Edward 1, his consort Queen Eleanor of Castile, was a well-educated and sophisticated lady with many interests including gardening. Seeds of Hollyhocks and other plants were given as gifts by visiting dignitaries and diplomats, nobles of the court quickly took to the new fashion of plant collecting.



By the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century John Gerard (1546-1612) features the double purple Hollyhock in his herbal, the most popular text on botany and plants of the age, continuing to be used into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Gentleman gardener, John Rea (Ray) in his 1665 herbal recommended Hollyhocks for being the most reliable of summer colour for the serious or 'florist' gardener.

The Victorians loved Hollyhocks using them extensively, usually as a centre piece in circular island beds, toward the later part of Victoria's reign Rust a fungal infection introduced from the USA was disfiguring the old leaves, gardeners of the day would remove the unsightly leaves and plant Dahlia at the base of the plants. A handy tip if you want to preserve old fashioned more susceptible favourites. Hollyhocks have been a much loved part of our gardens for centuries, those who set up home in other areas of the British Empire would take a few of the easily transported and long lived seeds on their travels, a link to home and a reminder of the garden left behind.

The black Hollyhock *Alcea rosea nigra*, was first recorded in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century gardens of Thomas Jefferson, in his Monticello plantation in Virginia USA, and may well have been sourced prior to his becoming President, during his extensive European travels.



## CULTIVATION

Hollyhocks can be established in your garden by various means, large plants or seed, and plugs, (small plants) are a convenient way of starting a Hollyhock colony. Larger plants even up to flowering size are wonderful ways of adding instant colour and stature to the garden; such plants may need a slight cane for support. Once established your Hollyhocks will self-seed to keep the show going.

The flower petals of Hollyhock are edible, a bit of a delicacy in Turkey; use them in salads, removing the bitter centre stamens.

We hope these notes help you with your Hollyhocks any questions please email us. [office@botanicnursery.co.uk](mailto:office@botanicnursery.co.uk)