

How to overwinter your free geranium

1. Get geraniums out of the ground

Dig geraniums up in autumn and shake the soil from the roots — no need to wash the roots or remove every bit of soil. Put the plants in a shady spot and let them dry for a few days. This will help avoid mould or mildew during storage.

2. Store your geraniums over winter

Storing geraniums for winter is super easy — you just put them in a cardboard box or a paper bag and close the top. Here are some tips to improve their survival:

- Keep your geraniums in a cool, dry location, at about 50 to 60 degrees F.
- Check for mould about once a month and remove dried leaves from the bag or box.
- At the same time do a quick check of the stems — they should be firm. If you find shrivelled, dried-out stems, throw them away.
- Soak the plants in water for a few minutes if you notice that plants are getting super dry and crispy.
- Dispose of plants or cut off any stems that are black or mildewed looking.

Traditionally, you store geraniums upside down in the bag. No one is quite sure why, but one theory is that it forces the moisture downward into the stems. Whatever the reason, it doesn't hurt and might help to store them this way.

3. Pot up overwintered geraniums in spring

It's time to pot your geraniums 6 to 8 weeks before the last average frost date in your area. Pull the geraniums out of the bag or box it's been sitting in for the past few months and tidy up the plants — snip off any extra-long roots, and cut the stems back to healthy green growth. Then fill a container with pre-moistened potting mix and tuck the stem deep enough that two leaf nodes are below the mix — that's where new roots will emerge.

4. Get geraniums growing

After potting up your geraniums, you should see new growth in 7 to 14 days. The real key to making this work is to water cautiously, only when the soil dries out about an inch down. In 4 to 6 weeks, it should look like the picture below, and you can start to harden it off to transplant outside.

