

# FOUR O'CLOCK TUBERS (*MARVEL OF PERU, Mirabilis jalapa*)

Perennial Tuber Zone 7b and warmer  
Self-Sowing Annual in colder zones Attracts Butterflies,  
Hummingbird moths & Hawk Moths.

Plant your Four O'clock Tuber after all danger of frost is past. Plant your tuber vertically (straight up and down) so that the top of the tuber is about 1" below ground level. The top of the tuber is generally more round than the root end, which is generally long and pointed. Space your tubers at least 12" apart or, to allow for future growth, 24" apart.

Not all of the tubers grow in this perfect shape so, if you have one that you absolutely can't tell which way should go up, then dig a trench and lay it down on its side horizontally and it can sort itself out. In this case, make sure the highest part of the tuber is about 2" below ground level – once it starts growing, you can dig it up and replant it vertically or leave it horizontal (they are more drought tolerant if planted vertically).

Depending on your zone, these can grow in Full Sun (cooler zones) or Bright Shade (warmer zones) in sandy, well-draining soil. They can be grown in full sun in warm zones, but they will require more water than if they are grown in partial to bright shade. These can be grown in containers, as well, select a container that will accommodate the depth of your tuber – keep in mind that the size of the container will determine the size of the tuber and the ultimate size of your plant. Use well draining soil or mix potting soil with vermiculite, perlite or sand for good drainage. These are very fragrant in the evenings, planting near a patio, deck or bedroom window will allow you to enjoy their fragrance and the hummingbird moths they attract!



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Four O'clocks are extremely drought tolerant once established, but to give yours a quick start, I suggest watering daily for the first week (make sure the soil is well draining – don't allow water to stand around the tuber), then cut to 3 times a week for the second week. After that, once a week should be sufficient. If you notice very wilted leaves, you may want to water more frequently. I rarely water mine, as they are growing in the landscape and we generally get sufficient rains for them.

Four O'clocks will enjoy some fertilizer about every 6 weeks during the growing season. I generally sprinkle some all purpose 10-10-10 or 6-6-6 fertilizer in their beds before a rain. Don't over fertilize – too much of this fertilizer can damage plants; follow package directions. If you notice a yellowing of the leaves, or their leaf color turning a light green rather than a dark green during the growing season, they need fertilizer.

Four O'clocks are perennials (will come back year after year) in zones 7b and warmer; they are grown as annuals in colder zones or lift tuber and overwinter as you would other tender bulbs. These can also be grown as container plants and overwintered indoors. They readily self-seed with fairly large, round, black seeds that form about 15 days after the blooms.

