

How to Propagate *Marshallia caespitosa*



Cultivating Charm: A Guide to Propagating Barbara's Buttons (*Marshallia caespitosa*)

Barbara's Buttons (*Marshallia caespitosa*), with their cheerful, button-like blooms, are a delightful addition to any garden. This charming North American native, also known as Prairie Marshallia, enchants with its delicate beauty and attracts a host of pollinators. While easily grown from commercially available seed, learning to propagate Barbara's Buttons yourself opens up rewarding avenues for expanding your garden and sharing this lovely plant with others.

Two Paths to Propagation

Barbara's Buttons can be propagated through two primary methods:

1. **Seed:** This is the most common and generally successful

method for propagating Barbara's Buttons.

2. **Division:** For established plants, division offers a reliable way to create new clones.

1. Sowing Seeds of Success

Timing is Key:

- **Fall Sowing (Outdoors):** For a natural approach, sow seeds directly outdoors in fall. This mimics the plant's natural life cycle, allowing seeds to experience winter's chill for optimal germination come spring.
- **Late Winter/Early Spring (Indoors):** If starting seeds indoors, aim for late winter or early spring, about 6-8 weeks before the last expected frost.

Sowing Know-how:

1. **Prepare the Seedbed:** Choose a location with well-draining soil and full sun to light shade. Loosen the soil and remove any weeds.
2. **Sow the Seeds:** Scatter seeds evenly over the prepared area and lightly press them into the soil, ensuring good seed-to-soil contact. Do not bury the seeds deeply, as they require light for germination.
3. **Water Wisely:** Water gently but thoroughly, keeping the seedbed consistently moist but not waterlogged.
4. **Be Patient:** Germination can take several weeks. Once seedlings emerge and have a few sets of true leaves, thin them out to provide adequate spacing for growth.

2. Dividing and Conquering:

The Right Time and Technique:

- **Spring or Fall:** Divide established Barbara's Buttons plants in early spring or fall when the soil is moist but not waterlogged.
- **Gentle Division:** Carefully dig up the entire clump,

ensuring you get as much of the root system as possible.

- **Separate the Crowns:** Gently tease apart the plant into smaller sections, each with a healthy set of roots and shoots.
- **Replant and Water:** Replant the divisions at the same depth they were originally growing, water them well, and keep the soil consistently moist until they are established.

Nurturing New Growth:

Whether you've propagated from seed or division, proper care is essential for healthy Barbara's Buttons:

- **Well-Drained Soil:** These plants thrive in soil that drains well.
- **Sunlight Requirements:** Aim for at least six hours of sunlight per day, though they can tolerate some shade, especially in warmer climates.
- **Water Wisely:** Water regularly, especially during dry periods, but avoid overwatering, which can lead to root rot.

Propagating Barbara's Buttons is an enriching experience, allowing you to expand your garden while deepening your connection with this charming wildflower. With a bit of patience and care, you can enjoy a bounty of these delightful blooms for years to come and share the joy of their beauty with fellow gardeners.