

How to Grow Eyebright

Eyebright is an annual semi-parasitic plant that draws nutrients from surrounding plants. This small, herbaceous plant grows to about 4 to 15 inches in height and sports tiny lavender or white flowers. Also called Euphrasia, eyebright is native to Europe, northern and western Asia and North America, growing in United States Department of Agriculture Hardiness Zones 1 through 9. The plant grows naturally in grasslands, fallow fields and roadsides, preferring poor soil to rich soil, and is found in many habitats.

1. Sow seeds in autumn to allow 90 days of chilling. Eyebright requires a period of chilling to break dormancy and trigger germination in spring. Alternatively, provide 90 days of artificial chilling by placing seeds in a moist growing medium in the refrigerator. Moisten several cups of commercial seed-starting mix, place in a plastic storage bag, add the seeds, cover with a paper towel and place the closed bag in the refrigerator.
2. Choose a grassy site that receives full sun. Eyebright grows naturally in sunny grasslands and meadows and draws nutrients from the roots of nearby plants. . The grass, however, should not be too thick and vigorous.
3. Thin the grass by raking or by grass-controlling chemicals if it is over-vigorous. Eyebright needs the grass for nutrients, but also needs enough space to grow. Leave about 40 to 50 percent of the grass in place.
4. Loosen the soil to a depth of approximately 1 inch using a rake or combining with your fingers. Broadcast the seeds over the prepared area. Eyebright seeds are fine, so heavy application is not necessary. Scatter around the host grasses, press seeds firmly into the soil and cover with loosened soil. Do not pack densely.
5. Keep the germinating seeds moist, but do not overwater. Test the moisture by squeezing a ball of soil. The soil should stick together, but you should not be able to squeeze out any water.
6. Allow the plants to grow undisturbed until August, when this wildflower blooms profusely.