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## Yarrow

Common yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) is a perennial, cool season forb that is common throughout North America. It is in the Asteraceae (sunflower) plant family. Many references refer to it as a weed introduced from Eurasia while others consider it native to some areas of North America. Regardless of how it got here, yarrow occurs in prairies, woodlands, and pine forests as well as roadsides and disturbed areas. It is relatively drought tolerant and will grow well in partial shade. You may already have it on your property, but if you don't, it makes a nice addition to any rock garden or wildflower meadow. Once established, it takes care of itself and spreads slowly.

Common yarrow starts out as a low growing rosette of "fern" leaves. The leaves are finely divided: hence the specific epithet *millefolium* meaning "thousand leaves". It flowers between May and August (depending on precipitation and/or irrigation). Here, the stems elongate and produce clusters of white flowers atop 6 to 24 inch stems. Once flowers have dried, seeds can be collected for planting the following spring.

Seeds should be stratified for a month before sowing. Stratification mimics a cold, damp winter period which many temperate zone seeds require for germination. Stratify seeds by wrapping them in a moist (not dripping wet) paper towel inside a closed zip-lock bag and placing it in a corner of your refrigerator. You can also use moist sand instead of a paper towel. Following stratification, you may sow seeds indoors or sow directly outdoors in early spring. Several references say that light is also required for germination, so sow seeds no deeper than ¼ inch. Germination usually occurs in about one to two weeks. Yarrow can also be propagated by root divisions in spring or fall.



[Common yarrow \(\*Achillea millefolium\*\). Yavapai County Native and Naturalized Plant Database.](#)

There are many varieties of common yarrow that have diverged due to geographic isolation and varying habitats. As with any plant that has potential for use in horticulture; yarrow has been selected from wild population and hybridized. The results include many showy cultivars which include white, cream, pink, red, and yellow flowered hybrids and many named varieties.

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Adapted from original Backyard Gardener publications by Jeff Schalau, Agent, Agriculture & Natural Resources, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension, Yavapai County

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