

# HELLEBORE FLOWERS OFFER BEAUTIFUL LATE-WINTER BLOOMS

A winter champion, luscious hybrid hellebores are some of the first to bloom

*By Janet Loughrey, Garden Writer & Photographer*

## *Helleborus x hybridus*



Photo by: Ngoc Minh Ngo.

- **Common name:** Hybrid Lenten rose
- **Zones:** 4 to 9; evergreen in 6 to 9
- **Bloom time:** February-May
- **Bloom size:** 2 to 3 1/2"
- **Height/Spread:** 18 to 24" tall and 24" wide
- **Site:** Partial shade, well-draining soil
- **Characteristics:** Low-maintenance, deer-resistant

Hybrid hellebores get their common name, **Lenten rose**, from the rose-like flowers that appear in early spring around the Christian observance of Lent. The "blooms" (which are actually sepals that protect the true flowers) last for several months, from February until May, and the foliage is evergreen in all but the coldest regions.

# PLANTING & CARING FOR HELLEBORES

Tolerant of a wide range of growing conditions, [hybrid hellebores](#) perform best when sited in partial shade in rich, moist, but well-draining soil. Hellebores are quite easy to grow, and since they are perennials, will continue to bloom for a number of years.

## Hellebore planting tips:

- Many gardeners like to plant hellebore flowers on a hillside or in raised flower beds to better enjoy their downward-facing blooms. See an excellent example of this planting strategy: [A Winter Jewel Box](#).
- When transplanting hellebores directly from their nursery containers, be sure to shake off the potting mix and free up any bound roots.
- Be careful not to plant your hellebores too deeply as this can hinder flower production. Make sure the crown of the plant is just slightly buried beneath the soil.
- Plant with companions such as [snowdrops](#), [crocus](#), muscari, [daffodils](#), [phlox](#), [trillium](#) and [bleeding heart](#).
- Hellebores contain toxins that are harmful to pets and humans, so keep them out of reach. See more [Common Poisonous Plants for Dogs and Cats](#).

## Hellebore care tips:

- In late winter or early spring, just as new growth stalks are emerging, any old or damaged foliage can be sheared back to the base.
- An annual application of manure or compost will help to boost the growth of your hellebores.
- Provide plenty of water during spring and fall when they are actively growing. You can ease up during the summer because heat causes hellebores to go dormant.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## **Do hellebores spread?**

Yes, hellebores will self-sow. However, allowing them to do so may result in unexpected hybrids if you grow multiple types in close proximity. Thin out any new seedlings that are too close to mature plants. Expect self-sown plants to flower after three years.

## **Do hellebores need to be divided?**

It's not usually necessary for the health of the plant; but if you wish to divide them, this is best done in fall. Hellebores can be fussy about being dug up and moved, so it's generally just best to leave them be.