



# yarrow



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Photos courtesy of California Cut Flower Commission

*Achillea filipendulina*  
Fern-leaf yarrow

### BOTANICAL NAME

*Achillea filipendulina*

(a-KIL-ee-uh fil-i-pen-dew-LEE-na)

*Achillea millefolium*

(a-KIL-ee-uh mil-ee-FO-lee-um)

(also ak-i-LEE-uh)

### COMMON NAMES

Fern-leaf yarrow (*A. filipendulina*)

Milfoil, Yarrow, Common yarrow,

Cottage yarrow (*A. millefolium*)

### DESCRIPTION

Yarrow has corymb-type inflorescences, consisting of individual stems of flower clusters that branch out from the main stem to produce flat-topped or convex flower heads. The flower clusters are dense masses of tiny daisylike flowers.

Fern-leaf yarrow (*A. filipendulina*) flower heads can grow up to 6 inches in width atop stems as tall as 4 feet. Foliage is green, fernlike and often aromatic.

Milfoil/yarrow/cottage yarrow (*A. millefolium*) flower heads usually are much smaller, on stems that typically top out at 2 feet in length. Leaves are green, gray or

silver; feathery; and aromatic.

### COLORS

Fern-leaf yarrow is most commonly available in golden yellow hues although there are a few white varieties. Milfoil/yarrow/cottage yarrow is available in a range of pinks, reds and oranges as well as white.

### VASE LIFE

With proper care, fern-leaf yarrow can last up to three weeks. It also dries well, adding months or even years to its decorative life. Milfoil/yarrow/cottage yarrow has a shorter vase life—usually five to 10 days.

### AVAILABILITY

Yarrow is available year-round, depending on species and variety; peak season, however, is April through October.

## vase-life extenders

**PROCESSING** Immediately upon its arrival, remove yarrow from the shipping boxes, and check flower quality. Next, remove any leaves that would be under water in the storage containers, and recut the stems with a sharp knife or pruner, removing at least 1 inch of stem. Immediately after cutting, dip or place the stem ends into a hydration solution, then place them into clean, disinfected containers half filled with warm (100 F to 110 F) properly proportioned flower-food solution.

**REFRIGERATION** After processing, place yarrow into a floral cooler, and allow the flowers to hydrate for at least two hours before using or selling them. Studies show that some species of yarrow are chill sensitive, so refrigeration at 39 F to 45 F is advised.

**CONSUMER ACTION** Consumers can air dry fresh yarrow by hanging stems upside down in a cool, dark and dry environment for one to two weeks (drying time varies with humidity levels). Yarrow also can be preserved by placing stems in a 50/50 solution of glycerin and water when (or just before) they reach peak development.

## purchasing checklist

- Purchase fresh yarrow when the tiny blooms composing the flower heads are fully open. If yarrow is harvested too early, the flowers will not open and will shrivel.
- Make sure the flowers' colors are rich and vibrant. Faded colors indicate flowers are past their prime.
- Check for browning flowers or rot in the centers of the flower heads.
- Make sure the foliage is turgid and full of color.
- Look for stems that are straight, sturdy and free of slime.



*A. millefolium*  
Milfoil/Yarrow/Cottage yarrow

Some information provided by: Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson Chain of Life Network®, [www.chainoflife.org](http://www.chainoflife.org) Dictionary of Plant Names, by Allen J. Coombes

## fun facts

**WHAT'S IN A NAME** The botanical name *Achillea* honors Achilles, the Trojan warrior, who regularly gave an infusion made from yarrow to his soldiers to treat their wounds.

**MEDICINAL VALUE** Containing more than 240 chemicals, yarrow has been used for centuries to treat a variety of internal and external maladies including pain; fevers; gastrointestinal distresses; and wounds, burns, bruises, lesions, sprains and strains. Dried flowers, leaves and even roots were steeped in boiling water to make a tealike infusion that was consumed or applied topically.

**FAMILY MATTERS** *Achillea* is a member of the huge *Asteraceae/Compositae* (composite/sunflower) family. Close relatives include chrysanthemums, *Gerberas*, *Dahlias*, *Zinnias*, *Asters*, marigolds and black-eyed Susans.

**HOME SWEET HOME** *Achillea* is native to Europe and western Asia but it has naturalized as a weed in North America, Australia and New Zealand. **sfr**

Hortus Third, by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey  
New Pronouncing Dictionary of Plant Names by Florists' Review