

Cultural Details: **Achillea**

An essential component of any perennial programme, these tall plants are best sold as green plants with a colour label, in Autumn, Spring and early Summer, with the possible exception of *Tomentosa aurea*, which has a compact habit so can be sold also in flower.

Although not grown to any great extent as a cut flower in the UK, *Achillea* lasts well when cut. To prevent collapse of the crop, some support is advisable.

They are very easy to raise, with few pest and disease problems. For a perennial, they have a long flowering period, right through the Summer.

Programming the crop

Generally sown in June or July, once the Summer bedding is out of the way, for sales in Autumn and Spring as green plants.

However from an early sowing (January-early February) they should flower in the same year.

Propagation and Growing-on

Use clean trays, bench tops and water supply to reduce disease potential. Sow the fine seed (6,000 per gram) onto the surface of an open seed sowing compost. Seed can also be multi-sown at 5-6 seeds per plug, into module trays. Cover the seeds with a very fine layer of vermiculite, and cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 7 days at 15-20°C.

As soon as large enough to handle (around 2-3 weeks after sowing), move larger plug trays and grow on until they have filled the cells and are ready to be potted up, into 8-10cm pots. Plants should be well established to survive overwintering unheated. For fewer plant losses, overwinter under cover and relatively dry. Keep good air movement round the plants to avoid *Botrytis* (Grey Mould) problems. Foliage dies off over the winter, then recommences in Spring, at which point some liquid feeding would be advantageous. If desired, smaller plants can be potted into 2 litre pots at this stage for premium sales.

Pest and Disease

Look out for aphids and spray accordingly, otherwise *Achilleas* suffer relatively few pest and disease problems.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.