

Cultural Details: **Antirrhinum**

An essential part of any bedding plant production programme, Antirrhinums (Snapdragons) are cold tolerant and so can be sold as early as April as green plants. They are used widely in parks and estates planting schemes, although they flower in 'flushes' rather than continuously.

They are straightforward to raise.

Variety Selection

Taller F1 hybrids such as Ribbon, Sonnet and La Bella make excellent items for bedding schemes. The tallest variety (Rocket) can be used as an outdoor cut flower, with the use of support wires to prevent the stems from keeling over. Compact varieties such as Floral Showers, Bells and Chimes can be sold in flower in the pack. Cheerio is an inexpensive F2 hybrid taller type for sales as green plants.

Programming the Crop

Sow January-March for sales April-June. The compact hybrids can also be sown in June to provide late container plants in September.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Sow into plug trays to prevent root disturbance or into seed trays. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Pelleted seed is available; this allows easier sowing and placement of the seed – full details in the catalogue. Germination takes around 7 days at 18-21°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 5 weeks the young plants are ready for transfer into 6- or 9-packs, filled with a standard potting compost. Grow on at around 15 °C until they are nicely established, then the temperature can be dropped to around 10 °C. They can be sold as soon as there is good leaf coverage in the pack.

Pest and Disease

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid damping-off diseases, and check for the presence of insect pests such as

aphids and whitefly, spraying accordingly. Rust can also be a problem on Antirrhinums – monitor the crop for the presence of the orange-brown spots on the leaves.

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