

CALCEOLARIA

Cultural Details: ZZ080

There are various types of Calceolaria, or Slipper Flower – check the catalogue for full descriptions.

As a pot plant, varieties Anytime and Dainty are generally sown from August to October for flowering December to March, although Anytime can be produced all through the year, except during the hottest period.

Sunset is a frost hardy type for sowing in early Autumn, for sale as an alpine. Yellow-orange bicoloured flowers are produced from April to June. Calceolaria biflora Goldcrest produces its yellow flowers slightly later (May-June).

Finally we have three similar yellow-flowered Rugosa types for Summer baskets, containers and bedding, to be sown in January and early February.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the tiny seeds (46-60,000 per gram) 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. Seed can be mixed with a little silver sand to make even sowing easier. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible, but do not exclude light. Pelleted seed is available for certain varieties for sowing into plug trays; this allows easier sowing and placement of the seed – full details in the catalogue. Germination takes approximately 14 days at around 15°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

Supplementary lighting rigs can be used to provide 'assimilation lighting' for more rapid growth during Winter months. After around five weeks, plants should be large enough to handle, and can be moved into large cell trays. Grow on at around 15-18 °C, down to 10-15 °C once plants are established in the cells. Calceolaria can be susceptible to overfeeding and over-watering, so use a relatively weak liquid feed programme.

After around a month, the young plants should be ready for the final container (a 10cm pot) or to go into the basket/container if Rugosa.

Growth Regulators

Growth regulators can be used (according to the manufacturers' guidelines) on Calceolarias to ensure a compact habit where required for pot plant sales.

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 pests such as aphids, whitefly, spider mites and thrips, spraying accordingly. Do not over-water the crop – Iron deficiency can result, so keep on the dry side.

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