

Cultural Details: **Gazania**

Gazanias have become very popular in the last few years, and the range of varieties to meet this demand has also increased substantially. Technically perennials, they are treated as annuals in the UK and discarded at the end of the season. The flowers open in direct sunlight, and close in the shade, so need a bright location when planted out. They are relatively straightforward to raise, but should be sown early in the season as they take a while to flower.

**Variety Selection**

The choice is between green or silver foliage – Moles has a number of varieties of each, as a mixture and separate colours. Then within the green types there is a wider colour range, including striped-petalled varieties such as Daybreak Red Stripe.

**Programming the Crop**

Sow late December to early February, for sales of green plants in late April and May, and of flowering plants from late May onwards. Sowings can be made up to late March, to provide pot bedding sales of fully flowering plants in late June and July.

**Propagation and Growing-on**

Sow the seeds (500 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. Sow into plug trays to prevent root disturbance or into seed trays. Cover the seeds with a layer of vermiculite, and cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 14 days at 18-20°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 7 weeks the young plants are ready for transfer into 6-packs or 9-10cm pots 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 or pot.

**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. Gazania should remain relatively trouble-free during production.

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