

Cultural Details: **Gerbera (Pot Plant)**

Over the last few years, as a result of intense breeding work, Gerbera has developed from a six-month crop, with an uneven flowering time and tall habit, to a rapidly-growing, compact and uniform item with fewer pest and disease problems as a result.

Seed is not cheap, so it is important to pay attention to the specific demands of the crop. Then you will be rewarded with a top quality pot plant.

**Variety Selection**

Moles Seeds offers two mixtures, Living Colours F1 with a bolder habit and larger flowers up to 30cm, and the smaller-framed Mini-Colour F1, producing many flowers with a height of only 15cm.

**Programming the Crop**

Under favourable conditions during late Spring, Summer and early Autumn, plants can be potted 5 weeks after sowing and spaced 3 weeks later, flowering commencing 12 weeks after sowing, and all plants should be flowering within a couple of weeks of the first flowers appearing. Early in the Spring, and later on in the Summer, up to 3 weeks extra will be required.

**Propagation and Growing-on**

Sow from December to July, (note growing temperatures and light levels required!) onto a free-draining, low nutrient 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 individually into plug trays to prevent root disturbance, and cover lightly with vermiculite. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes 10-14 days at 20-22°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

Use of supplementary lights at 5-7,000 lux will enhance development of the young plants if early-sown, as ambient light levels in February and March can be quite low. Maintain temperatures of 18-22°C.

After around 5 weeks the young plants are ready for transfer into 9-10cm pots - at this stage grade the plants into large and small size, each group will flower together. Space out the plants once the leaves of adjacent plants are nearly touching.

Grow them on at around 16-19°C, commencing liquid feeding once roots are visible at the base of the pot. They will be ready for sale around 7-9 weeks after potting. If sleeving the plants for sale, use a paper rather than a plastic sleeve.

## **Pest and Disease**

Monitor the crop for signs of Whitefly, Aphids and Thrips, and spray accordingly/use suitable predators, according to the suppliers instructions. 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 Mildew and Botrytis. Various root diseases can affect Gerberas, these can be avoided by paying good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean benchtops, and keeping the plants growing steadily, avoiding growth checks.

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