

Cultural Details: **Laurentia**

Laurentia is a recent arrival on the bedding plant scene. It produces masses of star-shaped flowers in blue, pink or white depending on the variety, throughout the Summer. It is technically a tender perennial, surviving the Winter in sheltered areas, but is generally grown as an annual, for use in packs, pots and hanging pots. Owing to its bushy habit, it is best used on its own rather than mixed with other items in hanging baskets.

It is relatively straightforward to raise, but requires plenty of time to reach flowering stage – sow ideally in September/October if flowering before June is required. January sowings will flower in June, February sowings in July.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the very small seeds 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. Germination takes around 14 days at 18-20°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

As soon as large enough to handle, move the seedlings into 4- or 6-packs or 9cm pots (or large-celled plug trays as an intermediate stage). Grow on at around 15 °C in a bright location, until flowering begins. There is little market for green plants with no flowers, as the public is not yet familiar enough with the plant, but once flowering begins, sales should be steady.

Pest and Disease

Laurentia has few pest and disease problems, if kept growing smoothly and grown in plug trays rather than seedling trays to avoid damaging the roots. Monitor the crop for signs of Aphids and spray accordingly. 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 attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops to avoid encouraging damping-off diseases.

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