

Cultural Details: **Lisianthus**

Lisianthus Lizzy is a relatively recently introduced pot plant with bell-shaped flowers of blue, pink or white on compact plants. Plants can also be planted outdoors in a sunny location, after frost risk has passed. They should flower from mid Summer to the first frosts, attaining a height of around 25cm.

The crop requires attention to detail throughout its near 6-month production period to get the best results.

**Variety Selection**

Moles Seeds offers one variety, Lizzy Mixed, available as pelleted seeds for ease of sowing.

**Programming the Crop**

Sow November to February, for flowering May to August.

**Propagation and Growing-on**

Then sow the pellets 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. The pH of the compost needs to be within the range 6.8 to 7, so additional lime should be added, to raise the pH. If this is not done, the finished size of the plant in the plug will be smaller. Sow into plug trays, with large, deep cells, to prevent root disturbance. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination will commence in 10-14 days at 21-24°C, and temperature must be kept within this range. Light is required for germination. If germinated in a germination room, provide 300 foot candles of light (3000 lux) for around 16 hours per day. Keep the compost moist, to allow the pellets to break down and release the seeds.

Lisianthus are very slow growing through the seedling stages. Use a weak liquid feed 13-2-13 at 50-75p.p.m. once per week as the first true leaf emerges, increasing this to 100-150p.p.m. as a couple of pairs of true leaves are present. Temperatures must stay in the range 21-24 °C days and 15-18 °C nights, otherwise 'rosetting' will occur, which slows plant development down. Keep supplementary lighting where possible, otherwise stretching will occur under these comparatively warm temperatures and low ambient light levels. Reduce humidity, (Lisianthus is a native of desert regions).

Once a good root system is present in the plug, and there are 4 developed true leaves, transplant into the finishing pot (which can be anything from 7 to 15cm) before the plug becomes 'root bound'. Select a porous medium that drains well. This is

particularly important when temperatures and light levels are low, and media is slow to dry. Lisianthus requires a soil rich in organic material to promote active root growth. Lisianthus root systems have high oxygen requirements. Provide good air porosity. Soils with high calcium and a rich phosphate content are preferred by Lisianthus, with a pH of 6.5 to 7. Water early in the day and provide good ventilation, to minimise disease risk. Do not let the plants dry out. Lower humidity a couple of weeks after potting.

Feed initially with a calcium based fertiliser 13-2-13 at 100-150 p.p.m., then when buds are visible change to 15-10-30 at 100-150 p.p.m. to keep the plant compact. After 6 pairs of true leaves are present, provide night break lighting where required to bring the daylength above 14 hours. Assimilation lighting during the day will help performance of overall crop, in the dull parts of the year.

### **Growth Regulators**

Unlikely to be needed except where temperatures have become very warm (over 30°C for significant periods. Always follow chemical manufacturers' guidelines.

### **Pest and Disease**

Lisianthus should be monitored for the following pests and diseases, and treated accordingly: Botrytis, Fusarium Wilt, Rhizoctonia, Downy Mildew, Powdery Mildew, Theilaviopsis, Pythium, Phytophthora, Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus, Impatiens Necrotic Spot Virus, Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Aphids, Thrips, Leaf Miner, and Sciarid (Peat) Fly. 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.

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