

NICOTIANA

Cultural Details: ZZ250

A popular Summer bedding subject producing masses of generally unscented flowers. The F1 hybrid varieties have a uniform habit, making them suitable for formal bedding use.

Variety Selection

Generally sold as green plants or in bud, with a colour label. The dwarf varieties such as Starship can also be sold in flower or in the pack. The newly-introduced Perfume series needs to be in a large pot for sales in flower, as it is quite vigorous.

The tall variety Only the Lonely, is produced for use as a feature plant in formal bedding schemes, reaching up to 1.5 metres in height.

Programming the Crop

Sow mid-February to March for sales in May and June.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the very small seeds (9,000 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. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Pelleted seed is available for sowing into plug trays; this allows easier sowing and placement of the seed – full details in the catalogue. Germination takes around 7-10 days at 18-22°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 5 weeks, prick out the seedlings into the sales container, generally a 6-pack. Once established, grow on at 12-15 °C, until the leaves have covered the pack and plants are ready for sale. The shorter varieties can also be potted into 8-10cm pots for sale as pot bedding in flower. To prevent stretching, grow cool, and do not overwater.

Growth Regulators

Growth regulators are frequently used (according to the manufacturers' guidelines) on Nicotianas to ensure a compact habit where required for pack production.

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 and whitefly, spraying accordingly. White patches may appear on the leaves – this is a peculiarity of Nicotiana (and to a lesser extent Petunia) and shouldn't adversely affect the performance of the plant.

Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary. Rev 04/04