

MOLES SEEDS

Petunia

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ290

Petunias have long been popular for containers, hanging baskets and bedding schemes. Available in a wide range of single and mixed colours, from white, the palest pinks and yellow, through rose, crimson, burgandy and purple.

Petunias are either Grandiflora or Multiflora. Grandifloras produce fewer but larger flowers than the Multifloras but Multifloras generally grow faster, have more branches and flowers, hence providing more masses of colour. Multifloras have smaller, thinner leaves and the flowers are usually not as ruffled or fringed - however, they also have a greater disease resistance and weather tolerance than their Grandiflora cousins. Both Grandifloras and Multifloras are available as double or single flowered.

They are happiest in full sun and a sheltered position, being particularly susceptible to wet and windy weather. Some varieties have been developed where either the petals are more resistant to rain, or the plant re-flowers very quickly after existing flowers have been damaged.

Sell in 6-packs, with basket and ground cover varieties in 9-10cm pots.

Variety Selection

Double flowered varieties such as the large-flowered Grandiflora, Pirouette and the smaller Multiflora Duo series, are for hanging basket use mixed with other species.

Also for baskets, and ground cover, are the vigorous spreading varieties Wave and Easy Wave, which are best used on their own in baskets and containers.

The Ultra series are a Grandiflora single flowered variety, featuring characteristics that growers can depend on, such as a compact and spreading habit, early flowering and increased weather and disease tolerance.

The Limbo series has a non-stretching habit which means it stays tidy in the pack, and once planted out.

For retail sales, Double Cascade is excellent as the habit is more upright than cascading.

Programming the Crop

Sow February to April. Early February sowings will flower from early May, March sowings flower late May to June.

The more vigorous spreading types, such as Wave and Easy Wave, can be started as early as January, to provide large plants early for incorporation into baskets.

Propagation and Growing-on

Seed is very small at around 9,000 per gram, and pelleted seed is available for many varieties allowing easier seed placement. If using pelleted seed make sure the compost remains moist so the pellets can break down and release the germinating seedling.

Sow into plug trays ideally to prevent root disturbance, or seedling trays. Germination takes 7-10 days at 20-24°C, when sown onto an open seed-sowing compost. Light is required for germination (10 hours at 10 ftc (108 lux) is sufficient), and to stop the seedlings from stretching. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

Once the seed-leaves (cotyledons) have emerged, begin liquid-feeding the young seedlings, and gradually reduce the soil moisture, to prevent stretching of the young plants. Throughout the culture, high light levels and moderate temperatures (10-15°C) will encourage a compact habit.

After around five weeks the young plants are ready for transfer into 6- or 9-packs, or 9cm pots, or else can be grown on in cell trays then used for baskets and containers.

The spreading varieties are gross feeders to maintain their very rapid growth, other varieties will require a moderate liquid feed programme. Plants should be flowering in five (Multiflora) to six (Grandiflora) weeks from potting.

Pest and Disease

Apart from occasional aphid, whitefly, slug or caterpillar damage, which can relatively easily be dealt with, there are little disease problems associated with growing petunias.

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

(06/19)

