

# MOLES SEEDS

## Stocks

Cultural Leaflet: ZZ340

Stocks (Matthiola) are an old fashioned favourite, popular as bedding in the garden, for their winter hardiness and gorgeous scent, they also make an excellent cut flower.

Varieties suitable for pots and bedding can be sold in early Summer in 6 or 9 packs.

Column stocks are an important cut flower crop with only a moderate heat requirement. They have long been popular in the UK, and good quality stems find a ready demand.

Some varieties are selectable types, enabling you to choose between single and double flowering, details of how are below.

### Variety Selection

Ten-Week Mixed is a popular summer bedding type - as the name suggests, taking just ten weeks from sowing to flowering.

Vinage Mixed is a non-selectable type that produces a large proportion of double flowers - great for Spring sales.

The Cinderella series are selectable - an improved dwarf variety, only reaching 25cm, making them ideal for pots.

The Lucinda series are for greenhouse cut flower production. Flowering period is from May to September, and they too are selectable.

### Programming the Crop

The annuals can either be sown in February-March for summer flowers, or in July-August for winter interest under glass.

For greenhouse cut flower, sow from mid-November for Spring flowering and early June for September flowering. Early sowings made in November with planting in December will require a little heat to bring them into flower in early Spring. Later sowings (mid December to the end of January) require little or no heat, and give better quality blooms.

### Propagation and Growing on

For annual bedding plants, sow February-March, cover with vermiculite, germinating in 1-2 weeks at 18°C. After four weeks, prick out into packs/pots as appropriate. Grow on at 12-15°C. Sow 3g for 1,000 plants.

For selectable varieties, sow the seeds (approx 600per gram) onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which must be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing

(to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Cover the seeds with vermiculite, and cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 7-10 days at 18-20°C.

As soon as the seedlings have emerged completely (around 14 days after sowing), drop the temperature to 10°C. After a few days, it will be apparent that some seeds have darker leaves than the others. These are the single-flowered plants and should be discarded. Prick out only the light green seedlings, which are the double flowered plants. As a guide, 5 grams of seed should result in 1,000 selected seedlings.

Transplant into large-celled plug trays or soil blocks, handling the seedlings as carefully as possible (by the leaves, not the stems). Maintain a temperature of 10-12°C.

For cut flowers, stocks should be planted into freshly sterilized soil with a low salt conductivity and a pH of 6.5-7.0. Grow quite hard for good quality stems, foliage and flower colour. A good level of potash should be used in the base dressing fertilizer, and a protective fungicide applied to the soil prior to planting will be of benefit, if the soil has not been sterilized. Follow manufacturers' guidelines when using all chemicals.

Plant up at around 15 x 15cm. Temperatures should be kept below 16°C to ensure proper flower initiation - once flowers are initiated, then a temperature of 7°C night, 11°C day, slightly warmer under plastic, will give the best results. Keep the compost moist at all times, and feed weekly with a 2:1:3 ratio feed solution. When 6-8 buds are open, pull up the whole plant, and stand in water until packing. Then cut off the roots and a few leaves, and pack singly, bunching smaller stems.

### Pest and Disease

It is essential to pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, water and clean soil to avoid damping-off diseases. Check for the presence of pests such as aphids and leaf miner, spraying accordingly. Monitor the crop for Downy Mildew also.

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

(06/19)

