

Cultural Details: **Verbena**

Verbenas are used for summer bedding and hanging baskets, depending on variety. They are fairly straightforward to raise, although the germinating seed can be sensitive to high moisture (see below).

Variety Selection

Moles Seeds offers a wide choice of bedding verbenas, also three trailing varieties for hanging baskets (Serenity, Imagination and Sterling Star) plus the tender perennial variety Bonariensis, which is becoming very popular as a taller border plant.

Programming the Crop

Sow February to March for sales in May and June. Sowing to flowering is 12-14 weeks.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow the 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 seed trays, or plug trays to avoid root disturbance. Then cover the seeds with dry vermiculite, and do not water again until germination has taken place. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Germination takes around 14 days at 18-22°C.

After around 5 weeks, prick out the seedlings into the sales container, generally a 6-or 9-pack, filled with a standard potting compost. Plants required for baskets should be pricked out into large-celled plug trays. Once established, grow on at 12-15 °C, until the plants are growing well in the pack and plants are ready for sale. Varieties such as Bonariensis, Aublieta Perfecta and Venosa, plus the basket varieties, can be sold in 8 or 9cm pots also.

Growth Regulators

Growth regulators are frequently used (according to the manufacturers' guidelines) on Verbenas 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. Do not overwater the crop. Verbenas are susceptible to powdery mildew, though this does not usually appear until after the plants have been growing outdoors for some time, but avoid damp, humid conditions in the glasshouse.

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