

Petunia Vegetative Suncatcher

(*Petunia x hybrida*)

A Ball FloraPlant Product

Propagation

- Choose a well-drained medium with an EC of 0.75 to 0.80 mmhos and a pH of 5.4 to 5.8
- Stick cuttings within 12 to 24 hours of arrival. Cuttings can be stored overnight, if necessary, at 45 to 50°F (7 to 10°C)
- Soil temperature should be maintained at 68 to 73°F (20 to 23°C) until roots are visible
- Begin fertilization with 75 to 100 ppm N when roots become visible. Increase to 150 to 200 ppm N as roots develop
- Once roots are visible, the media should be kept moderately wet and never saturated. This will prevent iron deficiency and the associated chlorotic foliage which can develop
- As the rooted cuttings develop, appropriate water stress and moderate air temperatures should eliminate the need for chemical plant growth regulators (PGR)
- **Suncatcher** Trailing Petunias can be pinched 18 to 24 days after sticking, when roots are well developed, to promote early branching and improve habit
- **Suncatcher** Trailing Petunia rooted cuttings should be ready for transplanting 21 to 28 days after sticking

Growing On to Finish

Media

Use a well-drained, disease-free, soilless medium with a pH of 5.4 to 5.8.

Temperature

- Nights: 53 to 61°F (12 to 16°C)
- Days: 59 to 76°F (15 to 24°C)
- Higher than recommended temperatures will cause stretch, weak stems and reduced flower size
- Recommended night temperatures will create maximum branching and the best possible habit

Light

- Keep light intensities at 5,000 to 8,000 f.c. (50,000 to 80,000 Lux)
- Low light levels promote stem stretch and reduced plant quality
- For **Suncatcher** Trailing Petunias, flowering is best under long days of Spring and Summer. Generally, flowering will be heaviest in April to September. Crop times will be significantly

lengthened under short daylengths

- For fastest flowering during short daylength, maintain night temperatures at 59 to 61°F (15 to 16°C) and use lighting to provide a daylength of 12 to 13 hrs

Watering

- Plants are susceptible to Botrytis – avoid high humidity, constantly saturated media and wet foliage
- Vegetative petunias are susceptible to root diseases if overwatered. Allow the media to dry slightly between waterings, but avoid any wilt

Fertilizer

- Vegetative petunias require heavy fertilization.
- Constant feed with a balanced fertilizer which contains a full complement of minor elements at 225 to 300 ppm N.
- Irrigate with clear water periodically to reduce the possibility of high soluble salts problems.

Media pH Management

- Plants must be monitored regularly for early, visual signs of upward pH drift (interveinal yellowing on youngest leaves). Regular soil pH tests are an excellent way to identify movements in pH before they create visual symptoms, which can be difficult to correct.
- Periodic application of acidic feed or drench applications of a chelated iron product can be used to maintain appropriate pH levels.
- An effective method of lowering pH is a soil drench of iron sulfate. The foliage must be rinsed immediately after treatment since the iron sulfate solution which can result in phytotoxicity to flowers and foliage.

Pinching

- Pinch plants 10 to 14 days after transplanting to improve basal branching
- For a larger basket or container, a second pinch can be applied, but will delay flowering approximately 2 weeks

Controlling Growth

- Use high light levels and cool temperatures to control growth
- To control growth and improve flowering and habit, growers can use 1 or more applications of B-Nine (1,500 to 2,500 ppm) starting 7 to 14 days after

transplant

- Mature plants which are approaching shipping size can be drenched with Bonzi (0.25 to 1.0 ppm) to significantly slow vegetative growth while allowing flowering to continue
- Use of PGRs can delay flowering 1 to 2 weeks. Avoid spraying once flower buds appear
- In general, more frequent applications of any growth regulator at a lower concentration will produce the best results
- These recommendations for plant growth regulators should be used only as general guidelines. Growers must trial all chemicals under their particular conditions

Common Problems

Insects: Aphids, thrips, whitefly, leafminers, fungus gnats

Diseases: Botrytis, Rhizoctonia, Pythium

Because Petunias are susceptible to several viruses, it is vital to begin with cuttings supplied from clean stock. All Suncatcher Petunia cuttings are derived from culture and virus-indexed stock from the Ball Certified Plants® program. Always start with clean flats and pots and apply a broad spectrum preventative fungicide drench following transplant.

Problem: Plant collapse

Causes: Wet media for an extended period (Pythium), Rhizoctonia due to planting too deep

Problem: Delayed flowering

Causes: Daylength too short; Late application of growth regulators

Problem: Excessive vegetative growth

Causes: High ammonia concentration in the soil; Over-fertilization under low light conditions; Low light levels and over-watering; wet media

Problem: Poor branching

Causes: Low fertilization; lack of nitrogen

Problem: Stretched plants
Causes: Low light levels

Problem: Chlorosis

Causes: Iron deficiency; High pH; Nitrogen deficiency

Suncatcher Trailing Petunia Crop Schedule & Uses

Unrooted cuttings:

4-In. (10-Cm) Pots 1 PP* 9 - 11 weeks
6-In. (15-Cm) Pots 1–2 PP* 10 - 12 weeks
10-In. (25-Cm) Pots 3–4 PP* 12 - 15 weeks
12–14-In. (30–35-Cm) Pots 3–4 PP* 13 - 15 weeks

Rooted cuttings:

4-In. (10-Cm) Pots 1 PP* 6 - 8 weeks
6-In. (15-Cm) Pots 1–2 PP* 7 - 9 weeks
10-In. (25-Cm) Pots 3–4 PP* 9 - 12 weeks
12–14-In. (30–35-Cm) Pots 3–4 PP* 10 - 12 weeks

*PP: Plants per pot or basket

NOTE: Growers should use the information presented here as a starting point. Crop times will vary depending on the climate, location, time of year and greenhouse environmental conditions. Chemical and PGR recommendations are only guidelines. It is the responsibility of the applicator to read and follow all the current label directions for the specific chemical being used in accordance with all regulations.

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