

Culture Notes

6/15/2009

Producing Sun-Loving Sunpatiens

Rebecca Siemonsma

SunPatiens is a new impatiens species that thrives in full sun and produces large, color blooms that have consumer appeal. Bred by Sakata Seed Company of Japan and distributed by the Paul Ecke Ranch, this new crop is now available for all growers to produce and sell.



Three distinct series make it possible for growers to produce the series best matched to their market. The Vigorous series is most suited for use in the landscape while the Compact series is ideal for containers and hanging baskets. The Spreading series can be used in the landscape, containers and hanging baskets, and this features strong, variegated foliage for additional visual impact.

SunPatiens are also different from common New Guinea impatiens in their cultural requirements. If growers plan accordingly and grow SunPatiens in a manner similar to a geranium, under cooler and brighter conditions, they will produce a crop with outstanding consumer appeal.

Cultural Specifics

For best results, direct stick unrooted SunPatiens cuttings in the finished container. This helps prevent stretch and poor branching. SunPatiens can be direct stuck in 4-in. pots or quarts, 6-in. pots or gallons, and hanging baskets. Traditional propagation in cells is also an option if you're using a larger cell size such as a 72-cell tray.

SunPatiens root in as little as two weeks. Rooting hormone is not necessary. Bottom heat is helpful and will enhance uniformity. During the first week, keep light levels at 2,000 f.c. and increase to 3,000 f.c. after Day 7. Mist as necessary in the first week to keep cuttings turgid, but do try to eliminate misting by Day 7 to reduce unwanted stretch. Growth regulating in propagation is beneficial in preventing stretch and enhancing branching.

On Day 10, apply a tank mix of B-Nine/Dazide at 2,500 ppm and Bonzi/Piccolo/Paczol at 10 ppm as a spray to both the Vigorous and the Spreading series. Make sure soil moisture is even, and apply as a heavy spray to runoff. Activity from the Bonzi/Piccolo/Paczol will be better when the chemical is taken through the roots.

On Day 21, apply a tank mix of B-Nine/Dazide at 2,500 ppm and Bonzi/Piccolo/Paczol at 5 ppm to the Compact series. Apply to runoff. Transplant cuttings on time and space them as necessary. SunPatiens will stretch quickly if spaced too closely. Establishing SunPatiens in the finished container will proceed more quickly if the roots have not been allowed to circle the propagation cells extensively.

Fertilize SunPatiens using a nitrate-based nitrogen at 200 ppm. Maintain EC below 2.0 mmhos and pH at 5.8-6.2. Once established, day temperatures can range from 65F to 85F (18.3C to 29.4C) and night temperatures can range from 60F to 65F (15.5C to 18.3C). Cooler temperatures will not delay flowering.

Grown under high light, adequate spacing and good moisture management, SunPatiens can be grown without additional growth regulation. The Compact series should not require additional growth regulation. If needed, drench the Vigorous and the Spreading series with 0.2 ppm Bonzi/Piccolo/Paczol. Applications can be repeated if necessary at weekly intervals, but all growth regulator applications should stop four weeks prior to sale. Don't apply growth regulators in the finishing environment to Vigorous Red and Compact Orange. Reduced rates should also be used on Vigorous White Improved. Florel should not be used on SunPatiens; flower abortion and stunted growth will occur with use. SunPatiens can be finished outdoors after all danger of frost has passed but the plants should be acclimated to 5,000 f.c. for one week prior to moving them outdoors.

Schedule

- 4-in. pots/quarts: 10 weeks from direct sticking
- 6-in. pots/gallons: 10 weeks from direct sticking
- Hanging baskets: three plants per pot, 10 weeks from direct sticking
- Hanging baskets: one plant per pot, 12 weeks from direct sticking
- Propagating in traditional cells will add one week to the total production time.
- Recommended spacing in the landscape is three to five plants per sq. yd. If night temperatures are cool when SunPatiens are placed outdoors, some transplant shock may be apparent as a slight wilting. Within a few days the plants should recover.

Rebecca Siemonsma is technical services manager for Ecke Ranch.