

# FIRST CLASS NEWS FLASH



**August 2006**

The season starts with the first shipments, and some of the first crops to ship are Osteospermum and Pot Carnation. The August News Flash will partly focus on those two crops.

Most of our readers might think that we are all about plants. Truth is, yes, we love what we do, but more important we do what we love. We are plant crazy and will go the extra mile for our customers, so it might not be a surprise that we like to do some crazy things also in our private time (I will start to tell about mine later on). The last few weeks we got many emails in reply to our new ad campaign asking if the kids are mine (by the way, they are not) So I decided to answer those kinds of questions via our News Flash. If you would like to hear more about the SFC team, let me know, and I will introduce our team as well as our plants to you using the upcoming issues.

## **African Daisy - Osteospermum ecklonis**



Osteospermum are one of the fastest growing crops in North America, and consumers love their daisy-like larger flowers, the large color range, and their early availability. It is a product that brings color into our life after a gray winter long before spring annuals are available. However, it is also a crop surrounded by many myths and old stories. Newer genetics like ours don't need a vernalization to flower however, applying a cold treatment during winter months will break their day length response, and extremely early flowering becomes possible. Summer performance has improved greatly over the last couple of years. Most new genetics will not stop flowering in most areas. In really hot areas (the temperature during the night is critical --not the day temperature) they still might stop for a short time. It

is not a landscape item; it is a perfect stand alone for early spring and fall sales and a great combination plant. Mixed with the right items, a short break in flowering will not bother our consumers. It is the ever-changing look of mixed planters that consumers love, and Osteospermum will contribute to that. It is one of the view plants that will return to full bloom in fall and flower for a long time.



Use Osteospermum in mixed planters (like the basket above), 8-inch pots (left), 5-inch pots (center), 12-inch baskets (right), and many more. Selecta offers different lines for different uses and one of the largest color selections available.

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## **Scheduling:**

Scheduling an *Osteospermum* crop starts by envisioning your finished product. Decide on the pot size and the desired finishing date. With that in mind you start to select the series / varieties that fit your needs. We separate the crop in two main categories, early flowering and regular spring flowering. In addition to that, we need to keep the location in mind (North and South).

The basics are the same no matter where you are located and what pot size you grow. What will need to be adjusted are the planting time and the forcing time, depending on your location. The easiest way is to calculate back from the desired flowering time. Keep in mind, the earlier the flowering, the longer the crop. The later the flowering time the quicker the crop.

### North, early flowering = March until April, 5-inch pots:

Starting from URC you will need to calculate 5 weeks for rooting, planting in week 6, and pinching in week 7. After side shoots have reached about 1-inch (takes 1 to 2 weeks), PGR drench the plants. The week after drenching, lower the temperature (crop time so far is about 9 to 10 weeks). Keep the crop cold for at least 6 weeks (can be more, but not less). The crop will need another 7 to 9 weeks to bloom (forcing period) with raised temperatures after that. For larger pot sizes (like 8-inch with 3 plants per pot) add about 2 more weeks before drenching. Total 5-inch crop time is 22 to 25 weeks.

### California Style, early flowering = February until March, 5-inch pots:

Because of the higher light conditions and the warmer temperatures, plants will grow also during the “cold period” (it is more a cool period). Start the same way as in the North all the way until week 9 of the crop before lowering the temperatures. Temperatures are not lowered as much, and the crop finishes in additional 10 to 12 weeks. For larger pot sizes (like 8-inch with 3 plants per pot) add about 2 more weeks before applying the drench. Total 5-inch crop time is about 19 to 21 weeks.



The left and center images show a spring crop in Connecticut at perfect drench stage (week 09). The right image shows an early flowering crop in California at finishing stage (week 10). Both are in 5-inch pots.

### North, spring flowering = April until May 5-inch pots:

Starting from URC calculate with 5 weeks for rooting, planting in week 6, and pinching in week 7. After side shoots have reached about 1-inch (takes about 1 week), PGR drench the plants (crop time so far is about 8 to 9 weeks). Sounds familiar to this point, but now it changes. Keep the temperature up and finish the crop in additional 6 to 7 weeks. For larger pot sizes (like 8-inch with 3 plants per pot) add 1 to 2 weeks before drenching. Total 5-inch crop time is 14 to 15 weeks.

### California Style, spring flowering = March until April, 5-inch pots:

Up to week 8, no changes compared to the Northern Crop. Finishing time will be about 5 to 6 weeks after

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drenching. For larger pot sizes (like 8-inch with 3 plants per pot), add 1 more week before drenching. Total 5-inch crop time is about 13 to 14 weeks.

Variety selection is an important part of scheduling, especially for earlier crops. Also the selected pot size should fit the vigor of the selected varieties. Please contact us for scheduling questions and the correct variety selection.



## Kenai™ inter-specific Osteospermum:

If you were wondering why I haven't listed our very successful Kenai™ series yet, you should know that I consider this crop as a spring annual crop. I don't recommend growing it using the cold crop scheduling. Instead, grow it using the spring flowering guidelines listed above. It is a quick crop, and the varieties are vigorous. Start late and finish quickly using a drench and spray combination. This way you will be able to achieve great results in various pot sizes, including 5-inch pots. This crop can be finished in 7 to 9 weeks starting from a rooted liner with 1 plant per 5-inch pot (URC root in about 4 weeks = total about

10/S to 13/N weeks).

## **How to grow**

Use a standard growing medium that provides very good drainage. Plants should be pinched about one week after planting. Plants have a high light demand; optimum would be between 5-9,000 foot-candles (start on the lower side for plant development, and raise levels for flower development). Low light levels, below 2,500 foot-candles, will prolong crop time. Avoid over-watering the plants and allow the medium to dry between irrigations (this is especially important during the cold period). Use a complete fertilizer containing higher levels (200 ppm) of nitrogen, with applications beginning as soon as the roots reach the sides and bottom of the pots. Maintain a growing medium electrical conductivity (EC) of 1.8 to 2.0 and a pH of 6.0-6.4. Avoid high salt levels and high pH. Regular watering and feeding programs will result in better quality.

I recommend applying a PGR drench. This will reduce spray applications and resulting in better quality. Depending on the location, drench with CCC 1,500 to 2,500 PPM, Bonzi 0.5 to 3.0 PPM, or Sumagic 0.5 to 1.0 PPM (lower in the North and for more compact varieties). If necessary, spray applications can be added until the visible bud stage. Use a tank mix of 1,500 PPM CCC and 2,500 PPM B-Nine, Bonzi 10 to 20 PPM, or Sumagic 5 to 10 PPM. If short flower stems are required (especially later in the season), spray short before visible buds (to avoid stretching of the flower stems). Always make test sprays before applying and follow the user's manual.

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For the cold crop schedule using RC, start with 68°F (all temperatures are the minimum daily average temperature) for the first weeks until plants are cooled. During the cold period temperatures can be dropped all the way to 43°F. To force the plants to flower, raise the temperature to 58-60° F (to speed it up, temperatures can be raised even higher however, during low light conditions this may lead to stretch). For the spring flowering schedule, start with 68°F and lower temperature the week after drenching to 58-62°F for flower development. Best plant quality will be achieved when grown cool, with high light levels and time. Use cool morning treatments for better habit and earlier flowering. Start at beginning of the forcing period.

Pests and diseases to scout for include botrytis, pythium, downy mildew, aphids, thrips, and white fly.

A golden Osteospermum rule is: "Do one thing per week" like planting this week and pinching next week, or drenching this week and cooling next week.

Please contact us for more information including variety selection, crop scheduling, technical information, and Pot Carnation crop combination.

## Pot Carnations - *Dianthus caryophyllus*

Pot Carnations are a crop for specialists trying to differentiate their product offering. Pot Carnations are a perfect match for Osteospermum growers. They work especially well together for the early spring flowering, requiring an early to late fall planting date (from RC).



## Scheduling

MammaMia™ line – 3.5 to 4.5 inch pots – very early flowering possible.

SuperTrouper™ line – 4.5 to 6 inch pots – early flowering possible.

DancingQueen™ line – 6 inch pots and gallons – spring to fall flowering possible.

Rooted cuttings should be planted in weeks 36 to 43 for early spring sales, and weeks 49 to 05 for spring sales. A crop for spring season sales needs about 20 to 16 weeks, and for early summer and fall sales, about 16-12 weeks (one plant per pot). For larger pots or baskets (for example 8-inch), use 3 plants per pot. Timing is for un-pinched rooted cuttings; starting from unrooted cuttings will prolong crop time by 5-6 weeks! Using a pinched premium liner will shorten crop time by 4-5 weeks. Please note that rooting Pot Carnation is challenging, and I therefore highly recommend purchasing rooted cuttings.

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The schedule is based on crop-data from the Vancouver, B.C., area (earlier planting / longer crop time) and Southern California area (later planting / shorter crop time); crops grown in Southern California are up to 4 weeks faster (depending on time of year). Crop timing depends on pot size, variety, and climate. Using more cuttings per pot will fill the pots faster and therefore shorten the crop time.

## How to grow

Use a standard growing medium that provides very good drainage. Pot carnations can be grown almost pot tight. Plants should be pinched two to three weeks after planting when the first side-shoots are visible and a flower bud has set. Plants have a high light demand; optimum would be between 5-9,000 foot-candles (start on the lower side for plant development and raise levels for flower development). Low light levels, below 2,500 foot-candles, will prolong crop time. Avoid over-watering the plants and allow the medium to dry between irrigations.

Use a complete fertilizer containing high levels (200 ppm) of potassium, with applications beginning as soon as the roots reach the sides and bottom of the pots. Maintain a growing medium electrical conductivity (EC) of 1.4 to 1.6 and a pH of 6.2-6.5. Avoid high salt levels and low pH. Regular watering and feeding programs will result in better quality.

Hardly any growth regulator is needed, but if necessary spray with 2500ppm B-nine or 0.25 – 0.5ppm Bonzi. If short flower stems are required, spray short before visible buds (to avoid stretching of the flower stems). Always make test sprays before applying and follow the user's manual.

Start with 68°F (all temperatures are the minimum daily average temperature) for the first 5-6 weeks (until side-shoots have developed – 1inch). For the early spring sales, lower temperature slowly to 50-54°F until 6-8 weeks before desired flowering date; raise temperature to 62°F for flower development. For spring sales, lower temperature after the side-shoots have developed to 56-58°F until finished. Ventilation should open at a temperature of 4-8°F higher than the heating. For early summer and fall sales, Pot Carnations can be grown outside (depending on the area). Best plant quality will be achieved when grown cool, with high light levels and time. Pot carnations need time to grow, and higher temperatures will lower the quality of the finished product.



Pests and diseases to scout for include rust, alternaria leaf spot, rhizoctonia, fusarium, powdery mildew, spider mites, and aphids.

Please contact us for more information including variety selection, crop scheduling, technical information, and Osteospermum crop combination.

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## Stefan Reiner - crazy about plants and the outdoors



Some of you might already know that Sabina Reiner, our Marketing and RC Production Manager, is my wife. This chapter will therefore not only cover me, but also be about Sabina Reiner, and of course our 15-months-old daughter Laura Reiner. Together with Laura we explore the outdoors whenever possible.

Our family pictures look more like the one to the left. Most of the time we don't meet that many people during our hikes, and that is why images showing all three of us are rather rare.

Growing up in Austria, I skied before I was 4 years old, and skiing is still one of my passions. Living in Southern California, we need to drive a while to get to a good ski area. One of our absolute favorite places is Mammoth Mountain. We love it because of the variety of slopes for different skills and the great child care-center they have. Laura still has about two years before trying on skis, and so she goes to the child-care center early in the morning, and we pick her up after skiing again. My

wife skied last winter for the first time and loved it. She is from Poland, and skiing is not #1 on their pasttime list. My absolute favorite run starts with Dave's Run, and continues down Ricochet. Because of the long chair ride back, it is not such a busy run. My number #2 run starts with Scotty's and continues down St. Anton. If you like it fast and icy, I recommend skiing St. Anton early in the morning. The lower half of St. Anton is like a huge half pipe, and if you stay all the way to the right in the shaded steep area, you can enjoy hard and fast snow. Skiing is part of my life, and I am very happy that my family enjoys the snow as much as I do (left below - Laura in Mammoth).



Another winter pasttime activity for us is snow shoeing. Our most exciting trip so far was Yellowstone National Park in February two years ago (right image). We snow shoed for a week, and, yes, it was cold. I have been to Yellowstone in summer and fall before, but if you like it quite and romantic and don't mind the cold, winter is the time to go.

We like to hike, and our favorite places include Yosemite N.P., Zion N.P., Sequoia and Kings Canyon N.P., and Joshua Tree N.P., not to forget Rocky Mountains N.P. and Yellowstone. Last year we couldn't hike that much, as Laura was too little. The year before we established a couple of our personal records and this year we started hiking again. We came close, but have not quite broken our records yet.

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Speaking of records, we like to challenge ourselves by hiking overnight trips as day hikes. Our record is two years old and was established in August 2004 in Yosemite. We hiked from the Yosemite Valley to Merced Lake and back in one day. It was a long day, but at the end of it we had hiked 27.4 miles with an elevation gain of 3,181 feet, most of it right at the beginning when hiking out of the valley. During those three days in the park we hiked all in all over 50 miles, including a hike to Clouds Rest (left image below).



Two weeks ago we were in Yosemite again, this time with Laura, and we hiked about 40 miles in three days. Highlight was the trip to Vogelsang Lake (center image) at 10,325 feet, about 0.5 miles further than the Vogelsang High Sierra Camp. It was a 16-mile hike with about 2,100 feet of elevation gain. Our highest point in the lower 48 so far was Flattop Mountain (right image), Rocky Mountain N.P. at 12,323 feet with 2,900 feet of elevation gain and 9 miles round trip, all well above 10,000 feet altitude and with 30 pounds (increasing ☺) on my back.



In October we will finish our 2006 hiking season with a trip to Zion N.P. (image to the left taken from the Observation Point last June). We will hike the West Rim Trail and The Narrows as day hikes. After Zion we will head to the Grand Canyon N.P. South Rim to hike the Hermit Trail as overnighiter (too crazy as day hike, even for us) and sleep at the Colorado River bank at Hermit Rapids.

This gives you an idea where we go to relax and re-energize for our job we love. We are plant crazy and love the outdoors. So if you have any questions related to Selecta plants or to the outdoors, you are very welcome to contact us. And yes, at REI they know us by our names (including Laura). Please let me know if you would like to learn more about the Selecta team. If yes, I might tell you about Angela's trip to Kenya, her upcoming Costa Rica trip, and about her Machu Picchu hike this October, about Frank's published book, and Sue's latest educational achievement.

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Stefan Reiner

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