

Time to get technical - part 2

It is September already! I can't believe how fast summer has gone by. It seems like the OFA Short Course was just yesterday. We had our first cool nights again and, yes, with no doubt, fall is coming.

I got a number of questions after my last two issues. So I decided to dig deeper with Calibrachoa and issues growers faced, especially this past season.

We will take a close look at the Fessler open house and check out

the latest from Selecta. We are building and investing to serve you better in future.

Besides the variety of the month, I added information for one of the favorite mixed baskets we displayed during Pack Trials.

There is lots to read in the September News Flash, so sit back, relax, and enjoy this issue.

Sincerely yours,
Stefan Reiner



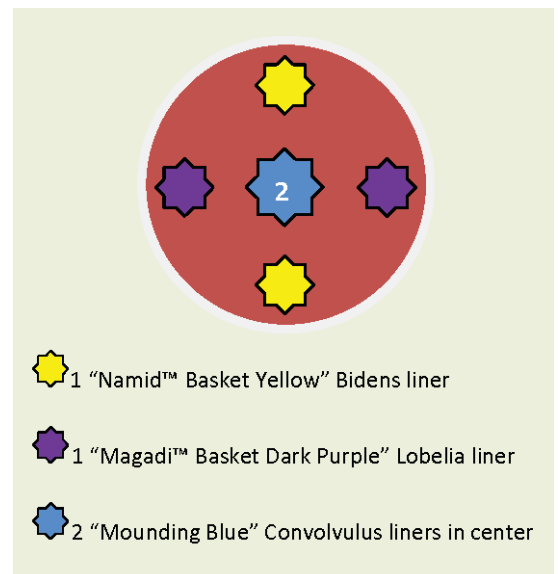
Variety of the Month

Mohave™ Bracteantha are the most colorful and uniform strawflower series available. They work great for growers and consumers alike, and retailers should know that we select them for lower water needs and self-cleaning characteristics. They simply work!

Combo with a Kick!



This Combo with a Kick combines the bold colors of "Namid™ Basket Yellow" Bidens and "Magadi™ Basket Dark Purple" Lobelia with the soothing color and flowing habit of "Mounding Blue" Convolvulus.



Selecta has put together a number of combinations using only three different varieties/crops in 12-inch baskets. Our goal was to show that sometimes less is more. The selected combination was one of the favorites. It combines three top-selling Selecta varieties:

- The kick comes from the controlled growing Bidens "Namid™ Basket Yellow" with its bold, golden yellow, large flowers and great summer performance. A Bidens that works

very well in mixed baskets, not too compact but not too wild either.

- Great contrast comes from the improved Lobelia “Magaid™ Basket Dark Purple.” Its flexible branching makes it perfect for mixed baskets, the color is bold, and the white center creates that appealing effect. The “Magadi™” Lobelia series is known for its early flowering and great summer performance.
- The flow comes from a variety quite often forgotten in mixed baskets. Convolvulus “Mounding Blue” is one of the only true blue flowering varieties for spring. Its growth is great, and it will come out of every corner. It flowers slightly later, but the shiny foliage will stand out in early spring.

Production

Starting from rooted liners is quite straight forward, as all three varieties used have quite similar needs. Convolvulus, however, should be a double-stuck liner (2 URC per liner) for better results. For a 12-inch basket use 2 liners per variety and plant as shown above (both Convolvulus liners are planted in the center). The crop time from liners is about 9 weeks, depending on the location and time of the year.

Use a well-draining growing medium with a pH of 5.8 to 6.2 and a low EC of 1.2 to start with. After planting, water the baskets slightly in without soaking them. Keep them warm until roots have formed and a pinch can be performed. Hang them about two weeks after pinching in a bright, well-ventilated location.

Increase fertilizer rates to an EC of 1.8 to 2.0 by using 200-250 PPM N of a well-balanced fertilizer with micro nutrients.

Keep temperatures at 65-75° F days and 50-60° F nights. Cool morning drops will help to improve plant quality, flower and foliage color, plant habit, and harden the plants. Start treatments after plants have branched well and cover the basket surface. Lower temperature by 8-12° F about 2 hrs before sunrise until 2-3 hrs after sunrise. Keep the average temperature up in order to avoid delaying the crop.

Avoid drying out or over-saturating the growing medium, as this will not only affect plant quality but also the finish time. Roots will suffer when conditions change from one extreme to the other. Grow them on the dry side, letting the substrate become dry (color turns light brown) before watering. But do so before the substrate starts to separate from the pot edge.

Use B-Nine sprays to control the baskets with a rate of 1,500 to 2,000 PPM.

Most common pests and diseases are aphids, thrips, botrytis, and pythium. Good water management and climate control will take care of fungal diseases. If necessary, apply recommended fungicides. Scout for pests regularly and treat early on. Please contact us for more information.

Fessler Open House

August 14 I attended the Fessler open house in Woodburn, Oregon. Actually I prefer calling it a field trial, because this is what it is. And it is probably one of the best and last field trials left in the Pacific Northwest. The plants suffered from a heat wave the week prior the trial and cool and cloudy weather with some rain the week of the trial. However, the plants looked great and the trial was very well attended as well.

I took a lot of images, and it wasn't easy to select the ones for the NewsFlash. Debbie from Fessler did a great job with mixed baskets and she even planted a nice ground bed as well. She struggled a bit with a late cut back on the Osteospermum (the reasons they weren't in full bloom) and a low pH in the Geraniums (some foliage damage was visible). The mixed basket to the right contains MiniFamous™ Deep Yellow, Fame™ Electric Purple, and Lascar™



Red + Eye.

The MiniFamous™ display was stunning (image to the right). Variety after variety a great display of color, flowers, and plant habit. It was very easy to see why MiniFamous™ is #1.

Some of my favorite varieties included Lascar™ Dark Pink + Eye and MiniFamous™ Tangerine (second image row).

The Verbena varieties did very well in the ground, and as an example, I included the image of Lascar™ Red + Eye. Many growers are asking for the difference between MiniFamous™ Vampire and MiniFamous™ Scarlet, and the image just below shows them side by side. Close up MiniFamous™ Vampire has the nice darker red color. From the distance however, it is MiniFamous™ Scarlet that shines. So it depends a bit what you are looking for and where you will use it when choosing between the two. I usually recommend to order 2/3 Vampire and 1/3 Scarlet for red. The last row of images shows more mixed baskets. One of them was shining from the distance, and it was the combination of MiniFamous™ Double Lemon, Double Amethyst, and Double Orange = the next generation Double MiniFamous™!



It starts with the liner

... but it takes a lot more to get to the finish line!

Calibrachoa has had a huge success in the market place. Introduced in the mid 90's, it has grown to the #2 or #3 crop in the vegetative propagated annual category today. It is right up there with Geraniums and NGI and left Petunia and Verbena far behind. This huge success was possible because breeders like Selecta have improved the genetics and added color to it. Growers are able to use them in all kinds of forms and sizes and they can be sold over a long period. Consumers love them because they perform and look stunning.

However, a crop that is used that widely and in such large numbers is quite often considered easy and even mainstream. This is not quite true for Calibrachoa. It is much easier to grow and finish a Petunia or NGI than a Calibrachoa. Its used in so many different ways that those large numbers we do are seldom in one house or area, they are much more all over the place. So it is no surprise that sometimes we reach the limits of this great crop. First response would be to blame it on the supplier, the genetics, the weather, or even the crop itself. However, the answer is hidden quite often in what we did or did not do to it. This great crop has not reached the ceiling yet. With new developments like MiniFamous™ Double, new colors, improved habits and performance like MiniFamous™ iGeneration, this crop can go much farther. Therefore we, the growers, need to sit back and re-focus on its needs.

It does start with a good liner, but it is important to talk about a myth. **Yes, hardening off the liner before planting makes sense, but it shouldn't be done harshly.** If you want the plants to grow on, don't shock them. Some growers, especially in the Southwest are lucky to have a lot of light

in winter, so they can harden the liners with cooler temperatures, even outside. However, this should not be done further North where the natural light is missing (HID won't be enough to make up for natural light). So don't try to make it like the guys in southern California because it will end in stunted plants having a hard time to get going. Move them to an area with more light, slightly lower temperatures, and more ventilation. Keep them a little dryer, but don't let them dry out. Don't keep them there for long; the biggest enemy for a successful start is a root-bound liner. Schedule your rooting so plants are planted rather quickly once they are finished and don't hold them. If you need time, space the trays out and keep them actively growing. When planting a liner you do want to see nice white roots with the fine hair-roots at the end (see image). If you have dark roots and a lot of roots, then your liner is root-bound and too old. After planting root-bound liners you will need to be very careful not to run into issues, especially root related. **Root-bound liners quite often do not root into the new media when not carefully watched.** Weeks later, when spring arrives with light and higher temperature, those liners may start to wilt and die. Pulling them out shows the dilemma -- they never really rooted into the new growing media. If you root yourself, keep the liners young and fresh. When receiving rooted liners, plant them right away.

Even with the perfect liner we still need to watch the first two to three weeks very closely. **Calibrachoa require a warm start** and a high-quality, well-draining growing media. Only after they have developed new roots and rooted nicely into the new growing media can we think about cooler temperatures. In order to get them to root into the new growing media, we must keep them on the dry side after planting the liners. Water them slightly in, but don't

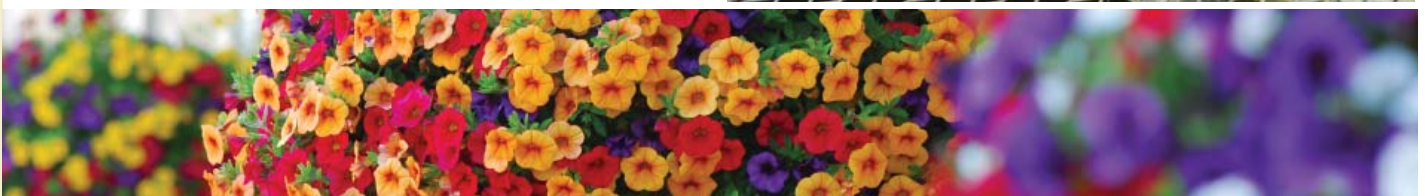




soak them. Keep the temperatures up, also at night. Start with a lower EC in your media (about 1.2) and use fertilizer with 150 PPM to start with (using a well-balanced fertilizer with micro nutrients) increasing gradually with time. Your pH should be around 5.8. Good temperatures to start with are 70-75° F days and 55-60° F nights. **Water management is very important.** Avoid drying out or over-saturating the growing medium. Roots will suffer when conditions change from one extreme to the other. Grow them on the dry side, letting the substrate become dry (color turns light brown) before watering. But do so before the substrate starts to separate from the pot edge. The images above show you baskets about a week after planting. Perfect actively growing liners got used, and they have a nice, bright, and warm start. After roots have developed, baskets are moved to an cooler area and hung up.



When growing mixed baskets, make sure to focus on the most sensitive crop used. It might just be Calibrachoa (as in the example to the right). No matter if you use a 5-inch/quart, 6-inch, gallon, 10- or 12-inch basket, grow a mono or mixed crop, the same basic rules apply. A perfect liner and good start make all the difference. Watch the weather and adjust accordingly (especially watering practices and climate control). The best way to keep a close eye on your crop is to weekly check the roots. Roots will tell you right away if something is wrong. "Listen to the plants and feel what is going on," my dad always said. **Growing a good Calibrachoa crop requires no magic; just paying attention to the details makes all the difference.**



Selecta News



Kenya



Kenya



Tenerife



Tenerife

We are adding production space in our three core stock facilities: KPP in Kenya, Erques in Tenerife, and Wagagai in Uganda.

The top two images show the work that is done at our facility in Kenya. Most of the parts used are shipped to Kenya via containers. We are adding 7 acres of growing area for Geranium and Poinsettia stock. The area follows the USDA-APHIS protocol and will also be used for US-bound Geranium production in the future. We moved Poinsettias all to Uganda a couple years ago, but the huge success of our Poinsettias and growing demand made us decide to add heating to this new area so it can be used for Poinsettias as well. The area will go in production for the 2010/11 season.

On Tenerife, one of the Spanish Canary Islands, we are building our all-new, state-of-the-art Solanacea and clean stock facilities. The first to be built facility will focus on Petunia and Calibrachoa production for Europe. The second facility is for clean stock production for products other than Geranium and Poinsettia. In the first phase we are building 4 acres for the production of Solanacea (see images of the facility and the inside of the area). The second phase will be for the new clean stock facility following next year.

At the same time we are upgrading our area in Uganda. There we just started to level the ground after dismantling the old houses. The upgraded area will be used for spring annuals and Poinsettias, starting with the 2010 Poinsettia season. The upgraded area is 7.5 acres in size. Solanacea products (Petunia and Calibrachoa) will continue to ship from Uganda. The new facility in Tenerife is for Europe only (Solanacea products must be produced inside Europe, as you can't import them).

This is all part of the restructuring process of Selecta's supply chain. Fewer locations but in different climates with state-of-the-art facilities give us the chance to grow the product where it grows the best and reduce origins causing split shipments at the same time. Productivity and quality go up and the overall supply improves. This is a win-win situation for all involved, especially for you, our customer. I will be visiting Kenya and Uganda late fall. So stay tuned for more updates.



Uganda

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