

Varieties

Surfinia Petunias: Production Secrets



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A global revolution in vegetative annuals began when Suntory introduced Surfinia petunias, the first vegetatively propagated petunias. Robust and vigorous, Surfinias reinvented petunias as a genus, which had been dominated by compact seed annuals. More than 20

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years later, Surfinias are still No. 1 in the world. The original trailing types span 20 colors with fresh new genetics including Deep Red, Yellow and Baby Deep Purple. Mounding types include four Patio types and three Baby Compact colors. Growers have especially liked the new Bouquets for their floriferous and dense habit. Surfinia Bouquets now span five colors, including the new Denim. But the most exciting introduction for 2013 is the new Surfinia Summer Double petunias in Rose, Pink and White. The Summer Doubles reinvent double petunias by offering the superb heat and weather tolerance Surfinias are known.

General Culture

Rooted cuttings should be potted as soon as possible into 4-inch to 6-inch pots. One liner per pot is recommended, using a well-drained peat/perlite mix with a pH between 5.5 and 5.8. Crop temperatures at this stage should be 55-60°F. Watering is key, as overwatering will lead to root rot. A little-and-often regime is encouraged when plants are very young. Surfinias are heavy feeders and the use of slow-release fertilizer is recommended as they grow in addition to liquid fertilizer.

Surfinia will require pinching to encourage the right habit and breaks to get a bushy and spreading plant. This should be carried out two weeks after potting. Surfinia is responsive to daminozide (B9), which can be sprayed at a rate of 2,500-5,000 ppm. A Bonzi drench can be applied at 1-3 ppm. Apply as needed. Surfinia grows rapidly in conditions of high light and high heat.

Crop Timing

- 4-inch pots – four to six weeks from one liner with one pinch
- 6-inch pots – seven to eight weeks from one liner with two pinches
- 10-inch baskets – 10 to 12 weeks with three liners and two to three pinches

Pests & Diseases

Key pests to monitor for include aphids, fungus gnats,



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mites, shore flies, thrips and whiteflies. Diseases to prevent include Botrytis, Phytophthora, Pythium, Powdery Mildew and Rhizoctonia.

Helpful Hints from Chris Spanton

Sutton Consumer Products, United Kingdom

Twenty years ago, Surfinia was well on its way to becoming a household name with gardening consumers in Europe as it revolutionized the hanging basket market by providing such good value for money. Across central Europe, it took the place of ivy geraniums on balconies in Austria, Switzerland and Germany, whereas before no other plant tolerated the extreme conditions of summer heat and heavy rain. It just looked fantastic hanging down in window boxes and baskets and it went on and on performing. Surfinia's weather tolerance to the English cool summers was fantastic. The plant's ability to flower back up the stems was another great strength, along with resistance to mildew. A lot of seed-raised petunias at that time would be done for by late August. There also is no need for consumers to dead head the flowers. Surfinia is self cleaning.

For the propagators, Surfinia is a dream to root – 3-4 weeks max on a bench. It responds to plant growth regulators (PGRs), especially B9. Its branching habit makes an excellent 4-inch pot with a quick turn on the bench. It can be flowered easily in the pot and kept compact with PGRs or a dry regime. Keep plants cool and pinch the crop only once as a plug or in a 4-inch pot. Feed well throughout its entire life. Ensure they get plenty of fertilizer in final containers. Always use a slow-release product, such as Osmocote, in addition to liquid feed. They just can't get enough! For larger containers and baskets, plant liners in odd numbers – three or five. For combinations, mix with mounding Million Bells calibrachos, Desana ipomoeas or Temari verbenas.

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john r. gerlach · April 29, 2013 at 8:18 pm

I have just planted " Surfinia magenta,Ultra Red Petunias , and yellow madness petunias" in a 15" by 15" concrete vase outside my porch . On the east side of my home.I live in Northeast Arkansas. How often do I need to water them?

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