Our final installment in our 14-part series on herbaceous perennials takes a look at *Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'*. 

by BETH FAUSEY, ERIK RUNKLE, ROYAL HEINS, ARTHUR CAMERON, and WILLIAM CARLSON

**Agastache** is also known as giant or anise hyssop, is a genus comprised of approximately 20 species of annual and perennial herbs in the mint family, most of which are native to the United States. All species have scented foliage and flower spikes in various shades of orange, red, blue, and white and are attractive to hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies. In fact, the name Agastache means, “many flower spikes” in Greek. 

*Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'* is a stunning cultivar originating from a cross between the North American species, *A. foeniculum*, and the Korean species, *A. rugosa*. Gert Fortgens of the world-renowned Arboretum Tromperenburg, located in Rotterdam, bred this award-winning cultivar in The Netherlands. Spires of lavender-blue bottlebrush flowers rise two to three feet above the ground and complement the deeply colored, licorice-scented foliage from mid to late summer (Figures 1a, 1b). Other noteworthy attributes of *Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'* are its tolerance to drought, heat, and cold temperatures; it is fully hardy from USDA zones 5-9.

Traditional perennial production is a lengthy process in which plugs or divisions are potted in the summer or fall, established in the container, overwintered, and forced in the early spring. However, by optimizing each stage of production, we can dramatically reduce the time required from...
propagation to programming the plant to flower, especially for vegetatively propagated perennials such as *Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'* that do not require a cold treatment for flowering.

**Stock Plant Management**

*Agastache x 'Blue Fortune'* is a quantitative long-day plant that flowers most quickly when grown under photoperiods of 16 hours or greater. To keep stock plants and the cuttings collected from them in a vegetative state, they should be maintained under photoperiods of 10 to 13 hours. In the United States, this requires the use of black cloth from approximately March 15 through September 15. Stock plants should be grown at moderate temperatures of 65°F to 68°F (18°C to 20°C).

**Propagation And Bulking**

Uniform tip cuttings with at least three nodes should ideally be collected...
AGASTACHE x 'BLUE FORTUNE'

- **0 WEEKS COLD AT 41°F (5°C)**
- **10 WEEKS FORCING AT 68°F (20°C)**

**PHOTOPERIOD: HOURS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photoperiod</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Flowering</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>16+Suppl.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- **Weeks Bulked:** Plugs should be bulked for several weeks under noninductive photoperiods (10 to 13 hours) as described above until flowering is desired. Three weeks of bulking at 68°F (20°C) is adequate for plants finished in a five-inch (12 centimeter) container (Figure 3).

**Vernalization**

Agastache x 'Blue Fortune' does not vernalize under all photoperiods but flowers more quickly under long days.

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require a cold treatment to flower and in our experience it provides little to no benefit. Cooling plugs is optional but not essential. Plugs can be stored for up to 15 weeks at 41°F (5°C) in a lighted cooler or cold greenhouse.

**Media, Fertilization, And Irrigation**

Agastache x ‘Blue Fortune’ performed well when grown in a well-drained, peat-based media at a pH between 5.8 and 6.2 with moderate fertility levels of 100 ppm to 150 ppm N, 10 ppm to 20 ppm P, and 100 ppm to 150 ppm K delivered at each watering.

### Table 1. Agastache x ‘Blue Fortune’ Production Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Practice</th>
<th>Growing Time (weeks)</th>
<th>Temperature</th>
<th>Photoperiod (hours)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stock Plant Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>64°F-68°F 18°C-20°C</td>
<td>10 to 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propagation</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>73°F-77°F 23°C-25°C</td>
<td>10 to 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulking</td>
<td>2 to 3</td>
<td>64°F-68°F 18°C-20°C</td>
<td>10 to 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold Treatment</td>
<td>0+ (Optional)</td>
<td>35°F-5°F 2°C-5°C</td>
<td>9 hours of light in a cooler or natural short days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forcing to Flower</td>
<td>8 to 9</td>
<td>68°F 20°C</td>
<td>16 or night interruption from 10 p.m.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Forcing to Flower

Agastache x ‘Blue Fortune’ flowers under all photoperiods but flowers most quickly when grown under photoperiods of 16 hours or greater (Figure 4). Although this occurs from June through mid-July in the northern United States, plants can be successfully flowered during the short days of the year with night interruption lighting from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at a minimum intensity of 10 footcandles.

When light levels are naturally low, supplemental lighting improves plant quality and flower number. From the start of the long-day photoperiod, agastache takes eight weeks to flower at 68°F (20°C) (Figure 5). Total crop time from the start of propagation to first flower for a five-inch pot is about 14 weeks.

**Plant Height Control**

Agastache x ‘Blue Fortune’ plants naturally reach two to three feet tall in the container. In our trials, the growth regulators A-Rest, Bonzi, B-Nine, Cycoel, and Sumagic were effective in reducing height of ‘Blue Fortune’ (Figure 6). In a crop we grew, plants sprayed with Sumagic at 5 ppm weekly for five weeks, beginning two weeks after transplanting, produced compact plants reaching a final height of 16 to 18 inches.

**Postharvest Concerns**

Agastache flowers can last for several weeks. Flower quality is im-

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Figure 5. *Agastache* x 'Blue Fortune' programmed to flower in eight weeks at 68°F with night interruption lighting from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Figure 6. Response of *Agastache* x 'Blue Fortune' to growth regulator applications. Each growth regulator was applied every two weeks until 50% of the plants in each treatment flowered.

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