



## PANSIES FOR FALL SALES

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Pansies are rapidly gaining in popularity as flowering fall crops. They can be sold along with fall mums and ornamental cabbage and kale. Pansies planted by gardeners or landscapers in September or October flower until night temperatures consistently reach 20° F or lower. In most areas of the country they over winter and provide early color before annuals can be planted out. Test plantings in Colorado survived temperatures well below 0° F.

**Potting Media** - Any potting medium used must drain well and provide good air space. Composted pine bark and coir are two components that can be included successfully in pansy mixes. The starting pH in most commercial mixes is adjusted to between 5.7 and 6.2. Ideal soil pH for fall pansies is 5.4 to 5.7 because of the need to keep iron available and limit the soil borne disease *Thielaviopsis*.

**Container Sizes** - Fall pansies sell well in a variety of pack and pot sizes. 606 deep cells, 4" and 6" pots are the most common. Smaller cell sizes dry out faster and are difficult to use for summer production. Pansies can also add color to fall combination planters.

**Fertilization** - Pansies are light feeders, with a constant feed of 100 ppm usually being adequate. 20-10-20 or 21-5-20 are good choices, with 15-0-15 being used every 4<sup>th</sup> irrigation to provide calcium. Griffin provides water tests that can be used to fine-tune your pansy fertilizer program. Pansies have a higher than average need for iron and boron. Iron deficiency appears as a chlorosis in the youngest foliage. If lab tests confirm iron is deficient, treated with a soil drench of iron chelate, (Sprint 138 or 330), at 3-4 oz per 100 gallons. Rinse the excess off of foliage to avoid spotting or leaf burn. Boron deficiency can cause mottled younger growth and distorted leaves in more severe cases. Boron can be added by drenching the soil with .25 oz per 100 gallons of Solubor, or 1 oz per 100 gallons of Borax. Do not reapply without testing the soil to confirm more boron is actually needed. Keeping soil pH in the recommended range of 5.4 to 5.7 helps to keep iron and boron available to the plants. pH levels higher than 6.2 can contribute to iron and boron becoming unavailable and steps to reduce pH to the recommended range should be taken.

**Crop Timing** - Fall pansies finish faster than those grown through the winter for spring sales. From 5/8" plugs, 606 deep cells can be grown in 4 - 6 weeks, and 4"-6" pots in 5 - 7 weeks. Use

three plugs per pot for 6" production.

**Growth Regulators** - Bonzi @ 5-10 ppm (1-2 teas./gal.) is effective as a foliar spray. (This is twice the rate used for pansies produced during the winter for spring sales.) Pansy foliage should mostly cover the top of the pot or pack before applying Bonzi as it is much more active in the root zone and significant amounts of spray on the soil surface could provide too much activity. If fall pansies stretch before most of the soil is covered use the 5 ppm rate and reapply at the same rate 10-14 days later or as needed. Many growers are having success using Florel on fall pansies. Some are applying 500 ppm (1.6 oz per gallon) soon after transplanting plugs into their final containers. Later applications may cause undesired bloom delay. Others are applying 300 ppm (1 oz per gallon) while the pansies are still in the plug tray. Florel encourages branching, reduces internode elongation and helps discourage premature flowering.

**Insects and Diseases** – Aphids, thrips, and caterpillars are the most common insect pests in fall pansy production. *Thielaviopsis*, also known as black root disease often attacks pansies. Symptoms appear first as uneven growth in the crop. When the smaller plants are examined the root system is typically dark, and sometimes you will find the roots never grew out of the original plug. A distinct yellow arc on the foliage can be another symptom that accompanies the poor root growth. Due to the increasing occurrence of this disease it is recommended that a fungicide drench be done at planting. It also known that a soil pH of 5.7 or below inhibits *Thielaviopsis*. Pansies prefer a lower soil pH for optimum growth so this can be effectively used to help combat the disease but does not eliminate the need for a preventative fungicide. Specific recommendations for insects and diseases mentioned in this bulletin are available at no charge to Griffin customers by requesting a copy of the bulletin titled, "Insecticide and Fungicide Options" bulletin for current year.

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