

GROWERTALKS

Growing With Griffin

1/1/2019

To Sunfinity and Beyond!

Jeanne Svob



The buzz around Sunfinity Sunflower has been hard to miss. Truly innovative new plants are relatively few and far between, and this award-winning introduction from Syngenta Flowers lives up to the hype.

Unlike traditional sunflowers, which are one and done, Sunfinity continues to produce new flowers throughout the summer, providing nine to 12 weeks of continuous color. Imagine beautiful sunflowers in your garden or on your patio from June to September!

A high-quality interspecific sunflower, Sunfinity is a vigorous, branching variety that continuously produces many large flowers per plant. Its ultimate garden height is 3 to 4 ft. with a spread of 2 to 3 ft.

So what's the secret to a sensational Sunfinity crop? How do you get Sunfinity to retail in a form that's irresistible to consumers? With the right attention to detail, these magnificent, high-value plants will fly out the door.

Start out right

A winning Sunfinity crop starts with a high-quality plug. Grown according to Syngenta's specifications, your 4-week-old plug should be 3- to 4-in. tall with a minimum of two nodes and four fully expanded dark green leaves.

Accomplish this by applying a 2- to 3-ppm Bonzi sprench within 48 hours of sowing to keep the nodes tight. A B-Nine application of 2,500 to 5,000 ppm may be helpful in the final stage of plug production, especially if you're shipping plugs.

Plugs should be pull-able at four weeks with 80% root mass. Sunfinity is a facultative long-day plant. Given 13-hour days or longer throughout plug production, Sunfinity will finish in seven to eight weeks after transplant regardless of finish daylengths. If you're starting with plugs that were produced under short days, finish plants in long days and add two weeks to your production time.

Two sowing tips:

1. Don't bury the seed. Doing so can result in uneven germination. A light cover of media or coarse vermiculite is recommended.
2. Protect your seeded trays from rodents and birds. Sunfinity seed is a tempting treat and one you cannot afford to

feed to these unwanted guests.

Not set up for plug production? No problem. Plugs are available from plug specialists nationwide.

Watch it grow

I mean that literally. Sunfinity is a big, beautiful plant that you must sculpt into a retail-friendly final form. A well-timed hard pinch and adequate PGRs will result in a beautiful, branching plant covered in sunflowers.

Transplant your plugs into 6- to 12-in. pots or larger patio containers. Use one to two plugs per 6- to 8-in. pot, two to three plugs per 10- to 12-in. pot, and three to four plugs per 14-in. and larger pots.

The next important step is the big pinch. Pinching is required to improve branching and control vigor. After the plant has developed six to seven nodes (one to two weeks after transplant), hard pinch the plant to four nodes. Four nodes will produce an evenly branched finished plant.

(A video on the Syngenta Flowers website—www.syngentaflowers-us.com—will show you how it's done.)

Sometimes, rogue shoots will develop between the cotyledon and the first node. Removing these shoots at the time of pinching will improve the plant's finished quality.

Apply a 2- to 3-ppm Bonzi drench one to two weeks after pinching. Apply a second 2- to 3-ppm Bonzi drench at the first sign of visible buds. To hold the plant for finish, apply a third Bonzi drench (2 ppm) when the flowers start cracking color. Higher rates may be necessary under higher light and temperature conditions. If you're producing through the summer for late August or early September sales that could mean doubling the recommended rates for spring production.

Preventative fungicide treatments for powdery mildew and downy mildew are recommended, especially in high-humidity environments. Follow the detailed culture provided by Syngenta Flowers on their website or consult your broker sales representative.

Call me by my name

Sunfinity is so special, we want consumers to know it by name. Sunfinity tags are required, one tag per finished container. Please specify the number of planned finished containers when ordering your seeds or plugs to assure the right number of tags are provided.

Sunfinity branded pots are optional and can be purchased from your preferred sales representative in 2.5-qt. and 1.5-gal. sizes.

MySunfinity.com is a consumer-facing website that provides home gardeners with loads of information on Sunfinity, including care instructions, uses and a store locator. Contact your supplier sales representative to have your retail store listed at MySunfinity.com. **GT**

Jeanne Svob is Seed Business Manager for Griffin. She can be reached at jsvob@griffinmail.com.