Bracteantha: Color for Fall

John Gaydos

Focusing on color is a sure-fire way to expand your sales—especially for fall. Bracteantha has always been a fall classic and its beauty can be the main attraction or an accent piece to any fall combo. Bracteantha can be a key component in creating colorful fall combos in colors that complement gourds, pumpkins and mums, giving gardeners unique ideas that go beyond the traditional fall plants and decorations.

Planting and finish times
Bracteantha and the Sundaze series is a terrific crop for anytime of the year and can be finished for fall sales. A 4- to 5-in. container will take roughly four to six weeks to finish. If you’re looking to finish larger containers, such as a 8 in., 1 gal., 10 in. or 12 in., bracteantha can take between five and 12 weeks to finish, taking less time on smaller and more time on larger container sizes. This timeframe is possible when potting up one liner per 8-in. or 1-gal. container and three liners per 10-in. or 12-in. container.

Culture

Moisture. Because the root structure of this crop can develop quite strongly to use a media that has a decent water retention characteristic. Select a mix that has good drainage yet holds enough moisture for the plants as the roots develop. The key is to keep the soil moist but not wet. Wet soil can result in formation of diseases such as botrytis and pythium.

Fertility. A constant feed of a 150 to 200 ppm balanced fertilizer supplying 25 to 30% ammoniacal will promote fast growth and lush green color. If stretching starts to occur, reduce the ammonium levels. Before deciding on the type of fertilizer to use, have your water quality checked and then decide on a fertilizer based on that. Sundaze require an average amount of micronutrients, so no additional iron is usually necessary. Aim for a pH level of 5.5 to 6.2 and an EC level of 0 to 0.6 (using a 2:1 extraction method).

Temperatures. Grow bracteantha warm to quickly establish the root system: 70 to 72F (21 to 22C) day, 65 to 68F (18 to 20C) night. Once the plants are rooted and begin filling out their pot, drop the temperatures to 65 to 68F (18 to 20C) during the day and 63 to 65F (17 to 18C) at night to slow growth and harden off the
plant. If planting in hanging baskets, plant liners close together to prevent the canopy from opening at the top. The use of Florel can also help fill the canopy and is recommended at 500 ppm. Bracteantha requires high light levels (5,000+ f.c.) to promote compactness and to accelerate their natural branching capabilities.

**Pinching and growth regulators.** Pinching is not necessary for fall crops. Sumagic at 5 to 10 ppm is effective in controlling growth rate. Growth can also be effectively controlled by non-chemical methods such as cool temperatures, high light, dry soil and low feed.

Proven Winners maintains cultural information on all of their Proven Winners, Proven Selections and Proven Winners ColorChoice varieties online. For more specific information on Sundaze, visit www.provenwinners.com. GT

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