

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Raising Joey

Danny Brooks



Consumers love to talk about and photograph Ptilotus Joey. They love its fuzzy, conical spikes and thick silver-green foliage. Ptilotus Joey is an exceptional plant and the perfect impulse item, no matter what type of retail location you have.

Native to central Australia, Ptilotus Joey offers exceptional beauty and drought tolerance once established. It prefers low but consistent moisture and lots of light during propagation. It's heat tolerant but also maintains its lovely bloom size, color and habit through temperatures in the mid 30F-range (0C).

Short crop times (approximately 12-16 weeks) and exceptional germination rates allow for quick turns. This makes Joey much easier to schedule and more economical to produce than tissue culture alternatives. Use as an accent in mixed containers or as a low-maintenance bedding plant for sunny locations.

But how do you grow the perfect plant? Here are some culture tips that will help you produce ptilotus Joey successfully for any program.

Plug culture

Sow one seed per cell in a well-drained media with a pH between 5.5 and 6.5. Cover seed lightly with vermiculite after sowing. Joey requires light for germination. Seeds will germinate in five to seven days at 76F -80F (24C-26C)

During Stage 2, maintain moderate soil moisture levels. At Stage 3, gradually lower temperatures to 70F-75F (21C-24C) and lower soil moisture levels. Begin feeding 50-75 ppm nitrogen with a low phosphorus formula. During Stage 4 temperatures can be reduced to 65F (18C). Continue fertilization at 75-100 ppm nitrogen with a low-phosphorus formula. Transplant plugs as scheduled and do not let plugs become root bound.

Growing on

Transplant plugs from 144 or 128 trays six to eight weeks after sowing into a well-drained soil. Transplant one

plug into a 4 to 4 ½ in. pot or three plugs into a 6 in. or gallon container. Maintain low but consistent moisture. Do not allow the soil to dry out completely. Fertilize at 100-150 ppm nitrogen, avoiding excess phosphorus and calcium levels. Grow at 68F-75F (20C-24C).

Ptilotus Joey is daylength neutral, but high light levels or assimilation lighting will improve plant quality by promoting shorter, better-branched plants with larger flowers.

Hints

Seeds should be sown from February to October for optimal plant performance. Although ptilotus can be grown year-round, higher heat and light levels will decrease crop times significantly. Excess moisture in the plug stage will cause uneven germination. Don't allow plugs or plants to become root-bound at any stage of development or the root system will never fully develop. A fungicide treatment to protect against soil-borne diseases before transplanting is recommended. **GT**