

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Sundenia Dipladenias: The Best of Both Worlds

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Brought to you by the breeders who introduced Sun Parasol mandevillas, Sundenia is a dramatically different dipladenia series from Suntory Flowers.

Historically, dipladenias have beautiful flower colors, but their shortcoming was limited flower size. The new Sundenias offer the gorgeous, large flowers consumers love in mandevillas, but on a compact, manageable plant. Flowers are 3 in. to 5 in. in diameter—double the size of a typical dipladenia flower. Plants have a bushy habit with superior branching. Consumers also will enjoy the high flower count and easy care.

Sundenia is ideal for patio pots and hanging baskets. The three colors are Red, White and Coral, which has brilliant rich pink blooms with red undertones and golden yellow throats. The series debuted at the Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) in Florida in January and received a Cool Product Award from the Garden Center Group, indicating high promise at retail.

Liners will be available exclusively through Sun-Fire Nurseries for the 2014/15 season. For growers, producing Sundenia is the same as growing the original Sun Parasol mandevillas. Follow these guidelines for optimal results.

General culture

Crop time ranges from three months for a small pot of 3.5 in. to 5 in. and six to nine months for a large pot of 8 in. to 12 in.

Provide high light levels. Dipladenias are long-day plants. Buds are initiated with 10- to 11-hour days.

Plants flower on every third leaf pair, measured from the base or from the previous flower on the stem. The bud is aborted in unfavorable conditions. Remove the shoot above the bud to prevent bud abortion.

Use a free-draining soil that is also water retentive. Apply 240 ppm of a well-balanced fertilizer every other watering.

Water plants sparingly in the winter to prevent root rot in the spring. Water plants sufficiently in the summer to encourage growth, but keep drier during the flowering period to prevent long shoots from developing. If the plant is too dry, it will drop its leaves. If it's too wet, root rot will occur in the winter or growth will be too rapid.

Managing growth

Pinching is necessary to encourage branching. Wait until the plants are fairly well rooted before pinching. To keep side shoots shorter, use Alar 3 to 4 g/L and Cycocel less than 1 cc/L (tank mix). Repeat as necessary (weekly during the growing season). DO NOT use growth retardants in the winter. Bonzi and Sumagic aren't recommended for Sundenia.

Pests & diseases

Monitor for whiteflies, Western flower thrips, aphids, red spider mites, fungus gnats, shore flies and mealy bugs. Diseases to prevent include Botrytis, Phytophthora, Rhizoctonia, Fusarium, Cyindrocarpen (root rot), Cercospora (leaf spot) and Colletrotichum (leaf spot). **GT**

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Delilah Onofrey is director of Flower Power Marketing and supports Suntory Flowers' marketing efforts in North America.