

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Precisely Perfect Ivy Geranium

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Paying attention to the details of propagation is important for any geranium crop, but for ivies, it's especially important. For an ivy geranium to meet the criteria as part of Ball FloraPlant's "Real Series," the breeders selected for an easy-to-control habit that holds its shape from the greenhouse to the garden. They also looked for early flowering and excellent uniformity. The best Precision Ivy Geraniums begin with "Perfect Propagation, Pinching and Planting."

Propagation

It all starts with propagation basics. Use a well-drained media with an EC of 0.75 to 0.80 mmhos (SME) and a pH of 5.8 to 6.2. Rooting hormone is generally not needed but may be used to promote more uniform rooting. A protective fungicide application should be made within 12 to 24 hours of sticking to reduce the risk of botrytis. Soil temperatures should be maintained at 68 to 73F (20 to 22C). Light during propagation should be kept at 1,500 to 2,000 f.c. to reduce plant stress.

Pictured: Precision Red Ice Ivy Geranium

A big difference from zonal geraniums is that ivy geraniums generally require about 20% to 25% less mist during propagation. They can often form a callus sooner, so part of the "Perfect Propagation" is monitoring carefully and reducing the mist earlier than your zonal geranium crop.

Another big difference is that ivy geraniums will benefit from a PGR in propagation. Once your cuttings are rooted, you can increase light levels, reduce watering for appropriate water stress and moderate night temperatures for cooler conditions. Often, though, changing environment is still not enough to create the perfect liner, as ivy geraniums tend to root quickly and stretch. The following PGRs are recommendations to help create the perfect liner for planting: Precision Ivy Geraniums are responsive to a B-Nine (1,500 to 2,000 ppm) and Cycocel (750 to 1,000 ppm) tank mix.

Pinching

Precision Ivy Geraniums require at least one pinch to help them branch for finishing. It's very important to give plants a soft pinch 7 to 14 days after transplant, leaving three nodes per stem. Ivy Geraniums don't branch well from hard wood, so don't pinch too low. There are conditions and climates where ivy geranium can benefit from a second pinch to promote more branching. Florel will increase branching significantly, but must be applied once plants are well-rooted and no less than 7 to 8 weeks before sale. A range of 200 to 350 ppm Florel should be used. Florel can be applied 1 to 3 times, depending on local conditions and container size, at 7- to 10-day intervals.

Planting

Use a light, well-drained media with a starting pH of 5.8 to 6.2. Test the medium regularly during production, as Precision Ivy Geraniums tend to acidify the soil in which they're potted, resulting in a lower-than-optimum pH. Early symptoms include cupping of the older leaves and a light brown, circular leaf spot. Symptoms typically appear 7 to 10 weeks after transplanting. Corrective actions begin with stopping the acidification of irrigation water and switching to a nitrate-based fertilizer. Flowable limestone or potassium bicarbonate can be applied for a more rapid correction. It's also a very important step to reduce the night temperature on Precision Ivy Geraniums to 62 to 67F (16 to 19C) to help tone the plant habit and reduce stretch. Ivy geraniums don't tolerate high night temperatures or temperature extremes.

Temperatures

As the crop matures, night temperatures should be maintained at 62 to 67F (16 to 19C) with day temperatures of 65 to 76F (18 to 24C). Geraniums grown with lower night temperatures will see a delay in crop times, while excessive day temperatures will result in stretch. A negative DIF of 3 to 5 degrees can be used to control growth in Precision Ivy Geraniums.

Light levels

Ivy Geraniums require moderate light levels and grow best at 2,500 to 4,000 f.c. Excessive light will slow growth and harden foliage, which may result in Oedema problems.

Fertilizer & pH

Use a balanced liquid feed at a rate of 225 to 300 ppm N on a constant feed basis. Maintain a pH range of 5.8 to 6.2 while checking the soluble salts regularly to maintain EC reading between 1.5 and 2.0 mmhos (SME).

PGRs

Under most conditions, plant growth regulators won't be needed for Precision Ivy Geraniums in finishing. To control finished height, Cycocel at 750 to 1,500 ppm can be applied 1 to 2 times at 7- to 14-day intervals. These recommendations should only be used as general guidelines; growers must trial all chemicals in their conditions.

Pests & diseases

Proper sanitation and IPM practices are the best way to avoid insect and disease problems with Precision Ivy Geraniums. Growers should actively scout for common geranium pests, such as whitefly, thrips, aphids, mites, leafminers, fungus gnats and treat accordingly. Growers should also regularly scout for pathogens,

such as botrytis and pythium.

Crop time: Rooted liner to finish

Precision Ivy Geraniums were selected to be well-branched naturally with a controlled habit. Precision works great in small to large baskets and can also be grown in all pot sizes below.

Container Size	Plants Per Pot	Crop Time
4-in. to 1-qt. Pots	1	8 to 10 Weeks
6-in. to 2.5-qt. Pots	1 to 2	9 to 10 Weeks
10- to 12-in. Pots or Baskets	3 to 5	11 to 13 Weeks

Geraniums continue to maintain their dominance as a key bedding plant gardeners enjoy. Innovations in both color and habit make this class more relevant than ever and Precision Ivy Geraniums from Ball FloraPlant answer the challenge with better—predictable—genetics the grower can rely on. **GT**