

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Reinforcement for Growing Celosia Armor

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Celosia Armor provides a very unique flower form with a wide range of container and garden applications in one series. Celosia in general can be grown in full sun and will tolerate moderate drought conditions. The plant habit consists of a strong center stem and layers of large and small leaves. The flower itself sits nicely just above the leaf canopy and, in fact, will dry very nicely if cut and placed in a short flower vase. The series features Orange, Purple, Red and Yellow and also is available in a series mix.

Germination

Sow seeds into a 288 tray using a standard, high-grade plug mix. Germinate at 72 to 75F (22 to 24C) with seed covered using a medium-grade vermiculite. Lighting in the form of HID has a positive effect on the young plants and helps in the initiation of flowering. Moisture levels should be consistent throughout the germination period of about seven to nine days after sowing. Once germination is completed and seedlings have become moderately established, moisture levels can begin to be reduced to assure proper root development.

Plug timing should be five to seven weeks if grown in a 288 tray—slightly longer if larger cell sizes are used. Temperatures should remain consistent for the first three weeks of plug life and can be lowered slightly as plants mature. Avoid ammonium-based fertilizers and instead feed seedlings using a Cal-Mag fertilizer such as 13-2-13-6-3. Once rooting has reached the plug side walls, growth regulators can begin to be used to control plant height. B-Nine, Cycocel or A-Rest are effective on celosia and should be the growth regulators of choice in the early stages of production. Consult labels for appropriate rates for your region.

Finishing

Celosia finish nicely in any container size: packs, containers or window boxes. At maturity, plant height and width can be 8 to 10 in. or more depending on finish temperatures and day length. In containers such as 1- to 2-qt. size and 4- and 5-in. rounds, one plant per container should suffice. Multiple plants, two to three, should be used in containers such as 6-, 8- and 10-in. rounds or squares.

Moisture levels should be moderate through the first 10 to 14 days and fertilization can begin after seven to 10 days, or once rooting has progressed. A Cal-Mag or slightly acidic fertilizer can be used throughout the finishing process. Celosia prefer a pH range of 6.0 to 6.6 and EC levels of 1.5 to 1.8 for optimum growth. Growth regulators can be applied between seven to 10 days after transplant. A-Rest, B-Nine, Cycocel, Bonzi and Sumagic have all shown effectiveness in controlling celosia plant height. Please consult label for rates of any plant growth regulator before applying.

Celosia Armor can be enjoyed all season long, either in the container or garden. Armor prefers part shade to full sun and tolerates mild drought conditions, but performs best when kept at moderate moisture levels. Flower heads should last for quite some time and are very durable against normal conditions. Flower head removal can be cumbersome given the proximity of the flower head to the plant canopy. It's recommended that the consumer use pruning scissors to cut away the old flowers to give way to fresh emerging color. **GT**

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