

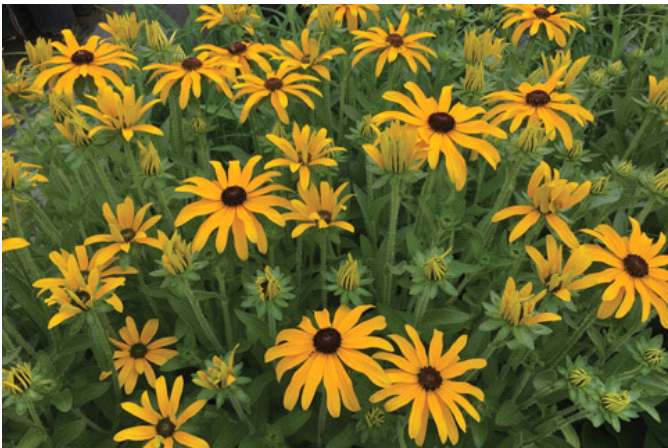
GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Rudbeckia Production That's Anything but Rudimentary

Josiah Raymer



Rudbeckia Glitters Like Gold showcases lots of deep gold, 3-in. flowers with deep, dark centers from late summer through early fall. Blooms are held above rounded mounds of robust, disease-resistant foliage. It will reach approximately 30 in. in height and spread to about 30 in. wide.

Glitters Like Gold naturally starts blooming in July and continues through October, but it can be forced to bloom earlier. It's hardy in Zones 4 to 9.

Recommended finish size

Transplant from 72 liners into 1- to 2-gal. pots, using

one plant per pot. Consider a preventive fungicide drench at liner planting to ensure good, robust growth from the start.

Finish time

Plants will be ready for overwintering or spring sales in approximately eight to 10 weeks.

Growing temperature

Rudbeckia prefer a climate on the relatively warm to moderate side. Aim for greenhouse temperatures at 70F (21C) days and 60F (16C) nights. Slightly cooler temps may work for production, but will add to finish times.

Media

Choose a well-draining, fertile, soilless growing medium. Glitters Like Gold isn't picky and will likely do well in your standard perennial mix.

Soil pH

Soil pH should stay in the 5.8 to 6.5 range.

Soil electrical conductivity

Maintain electrical conductivity (EC) at 1.0 to 1.2 mS/cm using the 2:1 extraction method.

Light levels

Provide high to moderate light levels, approximately 4,000 to 7,000 foot candles (f.c.). This is especially important

during the growing-on season. Glitters Like Gold thrives in part to full sun.

Supplemental lighting

Supplemental lighting is generally not needed to finish pots of Glitters Like Gold, but if you want flowers on your spring material, it's an option. Glitters Like Gold can be forced to flower in spring if grown under long days. Ideally, this would be done with vernalized plants coming out in spring.

Fertilization

Glitters Like Gold does well with medium to high fertility rates. Provide a liquid feed of 150 to 200 ppm or a slow-release fertilizer at 0.75 to 1 lbs. of nitrogen per yard. Monitor electrical conductivity levels to determine how often to apply liquid feed.

Moisture level

Water plants thoroughly, letting media dry between waterings. Avoid overhead watering in the early morning and afternoon.

Insects and disease

Treat with a preventive broad-spectrum fungicide rotation. Follow a standard sanitation program and pests shouldn't be a problem. This should include spacing that allows for proper airflow, which will reduce moisture buildup and foliar disease pressure. As always, regular scouting for diseases and insects will allow you to stay ahead of any problems that might pop up.

Vernalization requirements

For Rudbeckia Glitters Like Gold to reach its full bloom potential, it needs vernalization. Plants finished in fall and overwintered will need about eight to 10 weeks of cold treatment. This will result in plants that flush quickly in spring for early spring sales and give you the option to force early flowering. Plants potted in spring and grown without vernalization will finish, but may have reduced flowering.

Pinching and PGRs

No pinching is necessary and PGRs generally aren't needed for Rudbeckia Glitters Like Gold. Examine plants for fullness around their projected finish time to establish an accurate finish time in your production system and adjust the following year's production plan accordingly. **GT**

Josiah Raymer is head grower and general manager for Emerald Coast Growers, one of the country's largest liner producers, specializing in perennials, ornamental grasses and succulents. For more information visit www.ecgrowers.com.