

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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A Better-Version Salvia

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In landscape design, it's often too easy to default to same-old, same-old perennials. While they might have name recognition, in truth these genetics have frustrating setbacks that the industry has simply tolerated for the sake of familiarity or ready-supply (floppy appearance, inconsistent blooming, color impact, etc.).

The time has come to expect more from perennial performance! Today, there's a significant push by breeders to evolve and improve several classes of perennials—and growers can reap the benefits.

We call this new concept of next-level genetics Better Versions by Darwin Perennials. We've identified genetics that have been trialed and evaluated for landscape performance across North America, and have enjoyed at least five years of market sales success.

A great example of this new breeding is Salvia nemorosa Blue by You. Our creative plant breeders combined *S. nemorosa* with another wonderful hardy species, *S. pratensis*, to deliver a salvia that flowers earlier than

Salvia May Night and has continuous flower-power with multiple reflushes throughout the season. Blue by You is also the recipient of a national award from All-America Selections.

It's truly a Better Version of May Night and the industry can consider it as the new standard of *S. nemorosa*. Here are some key tips for production success from Darwin Product Representative Chris Fifo.

Propagation

Propagating temperatures should be 68 to 72F in the rooting media. We recommend using a basal stem dip using 1,000 ppm IBA-based rooting hormone. Cuttings benefit from a medium to high mist cycle for the first 24 hours to provide re-hydration and then prefer a medium to low mist setting until rooted. Slight drying in the media is beneficial.

We also suggest that growers begin with a balanced liquid feed of 17-5-17 or 20-10-20 starting seven days after sticking. This technique is very important to start them off well. Don't oversaturate the rooting media and remove from mist altogether as soon as roots begin to appear, normally 10 to 12 days after sticking. Remove any buds that may appear in propagation.



Growing on to finish

Transplant Salvia Blue by You into final growing containers eight to 12 weeks prior to sale, depending on location. (Scheduling information can be found at firstyearfloweringtool.com)

Salvia are considered heavy feeders and Blue by You is no exception. Controlled-release fertilizer at the rate of 1 lb./cu. yd. N can be incorporated into the media prior to planting or constant liquid feed at 175 to 200 ppm N is also effective. Maintain media pH between 5.8 and 6.2. Grow finished plants in full sun for best habit and flower color.

Because Salvia Blue by You requires no vernalization to flower, it can be planted and scheduled for on-demand shipping. It also can be grown under a traditional fall planting schedule and will perform as well as other varieties on the market, and has consistently exhibited a very early flowering response.

Plant growth regulators are typically not necessary for good plant development. However, if your growing conditions are causing signs of plant stretch, a spray of 2,500 ppm B-Nine/800 ppm Cycocel has been effective in reducing overall plant height.

All salvia prefer cool night temperatures to finish (58 to 62F/14 to 16C). Plan to deliver Salvia Blue by You when two to three flower stems are showing color. If this is too early for your market, don't worry—the long blooming window of Blue by You provides plenty of time to send plants to market.

Explore more breeding evolution at darwinperennials.com/BetterVersions and offer your customers the next generation of top-performing perennials. **GT**

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