

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Reach for the Sky

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When Petunia Headliner Night Sky set the gardening universe a-buzz in 2016 with its special constellation-like blooms, the demand for more “sky” patterns rocketed. It was soon followed by series improvements, more color palettes and a widening array of habits. Sky patterns were a sensation on social media, too, and the breeders at Selecta One knew they’d captured the attention of growers and gardeners alike.

Left: Sky Orange Poinsettia

From those initial petunias comes an exciting starry pattern now available in poinsettias—specifically, two varieties by Selecta One: Sky Fantasy and Sky Orange. Each has bracts speckled uniquely and finishing as late-season poinsettias perfect for natural-season sales after Thanksgiving. In my opinion, on poinsettias, this whimsical sky pattern has the effect of fresh-fallen snowflakes—a great complement to the vibe of the holiday season.

Both Sky Fantasy and Sky Orange have dark green foliage and large bracts. Their response time (to first pollen) is 8 to 8.5 weeks, and they fit into the mid-range in terms of vigor. As for recommended finished container sizes, the Sky series can be grown as small as 2.5 in. (mini size options) up through 8-in. pots.

Propagation

Apply rooting hormone to the base of the cutting. Sky Poinsettias root rapidly—plant from liner in 19 to 21 days. This variety also uses feed aggressively. Start your feed program around Day 7. Failure to feed early enough will result in yellowing.

Because of its vigor level, Sky Fantasy and Sky Orange will require PGR application in propagation (500 to 750 ppm Cycocel spray at Day 15 to 20, which can be repeated, if necessary). Plant from liners to finished container when well rooted to prevent stretch.

Early finished growth

Pinch the Sky Poinsettias early at Day 14 to 16 from a liner, Day 24 to 26 for direct-stick. Failure to pinch early will result in uneven branching. Apply a light PGR when branches are 1 to 1.5 in. (2.5 to 4 cm) using Cycocel spray at

500 to 750 ppm. This is recommended to even out the branches since branching occurs rapidly after pinch. PGRs may be needed at seven days.

The Sky series has a very upright habit and can go to final spacing very early if needed. Supplemental rings can be avoided, even in large pots.



Left: Sky Fantasy Poinsettia

Growing on

Once branches develop, Sky Fantasy and Sky Orange will grow aggressively with strong growth October into early November. It will slow as finishing approaches in late November.

Cooler temperatures improve the unique sky color pattern. Overall, these unique Sky varieties from Selecta One rely on cooler temperatures for their dappled patterns to display, making northern locations their ideal regions.

- Nights: 62F (17C)
- Days: 72F (22C)

In northern climates, limit PGRs to a Cycocel spray at 500 to 1,000 ppm. For southern climates, use one to two spray applications of B-Nine (1,000 ppm)/Cycocel (500 ppm) before September 20. As for growth control, apply a late PGR application at the end (October 15): Cycocel spray 500 to 750 ppm. Micro Bonzi drenches can begin in early October, however, overly aggressive PGR applications in October can result in smaller bracts.

Late growing stages

Feed Sky Poinsettias continuously until finish, being mindful of media EC. Reduce feed levels to avoid rapid increase as the plants' needs for nutrition are waning. NOTE: High EC at finish can result in root damage, reduced shelf life and possible Pythium.

Sky Fantasy and Sky Orange finish naturally in late November to early December, but can be held cool to target Week 50 to 51 sales. Avoid dew point to prevent Botrytis.

With these guidelines above, your greenhouse can offer something new to your customers and provide an exciting buzz in stores. To further help with sell-through, look to our Selecta One North America website where our team has developed special retail marketing options to support these uniquely patterned poinsettias. From posters to pot sleeves to tags, these print-on-demand or supplier-supplied POP can have holiday shoppers reaching for the sky!

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Lauren Blume is a Territory Manager for Selecta One North America and is a member of the technical support team for plant culture guidelines. Visit selectanorthamerica.com for more grower resources.