

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

5/30/2025

Hit Key Sales Windows With Dianthus

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The most dynamic part of choosing which dianthus to grow is scheduling. It's complex because of all the possible variables: regionality, seasonality, your growing structure, selected container size, market targets and others. Many of these can be adjusted to fit your growing needs; you can use supplemental lighting or temperature to develop your dianthus. There's also a wide assortment of genetics that can help you be successful.

At Selecta One, we want to take the guesswork out of scheduling dianthus. Here's a brief dive into those variables as you're mapping out your next dianthus program.

First: Genetics

Selecta One has a few branded dianthus varieties that are naturally early to flower and will fit all regions for that critical Valentine's Day sales window.

So if you're focusing on the "easy button" look for the I Love U and Early

Love Dianthus, ideally suited for this holiday.

I Love U is very compact and very free flowering, while Early Love is a little more vigorous, but still has that very early timing. Plus, there are marketing and retail support programs to help with sell-through of both of those varieties (find out more at our website selectanorthamerica.com).

However, if you prefer a non-branded early dianthus program, consider the Oscar or DiaDeur series, which are sport-based series with high uniformity. Oscar is compact and very early; DiaDeur is highly fragrant with a robust habit. They're both especially good for early colorful combinations. You can put multiple Oscar colors or DiaDeur together in the same pot and they'll balance out.

Bring the scale up a notch to a garden dianthus with Capitán, which fits a larger 8-in. pot and beyond. For the end user it brings a cuttable stem size so it's a whole new genre for the shopper.

In addition to the pot types, there are perennial dianthus options to consider. The EverLast collection of mounding, Zone 5-hardy dianthus has single- and double-flower types. Pashmina is a groundcover-like choice for landscapes or patio pots. Even the top-seller globally, Pink Kisses, is a Zone-5 perennial (sold mostly as a potted carnation

because of its retail gift appeal).

Knowing what you're trying to produce for the market and when you want to sell it will be key. The multitude of genetics plays a part, so we hope the brief intro above helps.

Regionality, seasonality & lighting

Regional variabilities will affect your scheduling, too. Crop times in Homestead, Georgia, are going to be dramatically different than a crop time in Edmonton, Alberta. They're all very doable, but your greenhouse setup should be considered.

Are you growing on a bench? Do you have bottom heat? Do you have supplemental lighting? Do you have glass frame or poly?

These are energy machines for dianthus. The more daily mols you give them, the better they'll develop. Dianthus prefer bright light and cool temperatures, so seasonality—when and how you want to grow dianthus—can result in very different crop timing.

For instance, you can fast-crop dianthus with the most modest of greenhouse regimes for May to June sales, whereas if you want them out the door in February—with a not-naturally early genetic—you'll have to mitigate the weather variable with supplemental lighting.

The use of supplemental light for both natural daylength augmentation and daylength extension can be useful to increase growth and hasten flowering. With LED lighting, typically increased feed levels are needed to maintain a media EC of 1.5 (pour through). With HPS lights, PGRs may be needed due to the warming of the plants from the lights—not to control the size of the plant, per se. It's more about leveling off the height of that flower.

To further force dianthus color if the crop is falling behind, you can increase temperatures for the last few weeks of development to open the flowers if needed. A lower rate PGR application can keep the flower stems from elongating too much with the higher temperature, and an increase of feed can achieve the media EC of 1.5.

What you don't want to do is grow them contiguously warm because then they'll just stay vegetative. Starting cool and then forcing them up to 68 to 70F (20 to 21C) once the buds are on the plant will pop the color and give you a technique to hit your sales windows.

To assist you further with dianthus scheduling, go to [the Selecta One North America website](#), which offers charts and online tools to pinpoint your greenhouse variables and suggest genetics to meet various scheduling needs.

Watch for additional plant culture details and techniques developed by Selecta One to help greenhouse growers produce—and schedule—successful dianthus programs. **GT**

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