

GROWERTALKS

Culture Notes

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Always Sunny Gold Sunflower—Always Show-Stopping

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Large-size, multi-blooming landscape-type sunflowers have become highly popular due to their strong consumer appeal at point of sale. Who doesn't love a sunflower? Also, their reliable landscape and garden performance throughout the summer can't be beat. The award-winning Sunflower Always Sunny Gold is a new addition to this category from PanAmerican Seed and it brings several key advantages over other commercial varieties.

Sunflower Always Sunny Gold.

Always Sunny Gold has a more compact greenhouse habit, which is great for the grower. It's a fast crop to get out the door and the plants are well branched, providing a full attractive flower display whether you pinch or not (more on that below). Besides its use as a fresh cut flower, Always Sunny Gold has extended garden performance, too, making it an attractive product for the landscaper or home gardener.

Another important point is that Always Sunny Gold has 100% pollen-free flowers. This keeps retail benches clean and there's no mess when cut for bouquets. However, the plants are still rich in nectar, making them a pollinator and beneficial insect food source.

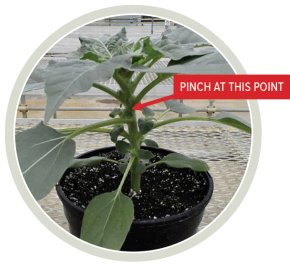
Germination & plug culture

PanAmerican Seed is supplying Always Sunny Gold as raw seed. Since sunflower tends to be quite a bit larger than our common annuals in production, we're recommending a 128-cell or larger tray. A heavy cover is critical for getting maximum germination. It provides a high humidity environment and consistent moisture throughout germination to achieve seedling uniformity.

Always Sunny Gold benefits from PGR use both in plug, as well as in finish stage. In plugs, we're recommending a 2 ppm paclobutrazol sprinch at radical emergence to prevent stretching. Twice the usual spray volume is applied to get the benefits of both spray and drench.

Interspecific sunflowers are facultative long-day plants. That means Always Sunny Gold flowers faster under long

days and it flowers about two weeks faster under long days compared to short days. Long day treatment can be provided in the plug stage and we recommend providing a 14-hour daylength, or a night interruption treatment, which means the lamps turn on at 10:00 p.m. and turn off at 2:00 a.m.



Pinching tips

If you don't pinch Always Sunny Gold, you end up with one central bloom, which is followed by secondary flowers. However, if the retail goal is to produce multiple flowering stems at once, which is most desirable to garden and landscape consumers and yields higher sell-through, a pinch is recommended.

Pinching should be given at the eight-leaf mark, which means you keep eight leaves and you remove four to six leaves at that pinch.

Pinch plants when they have about 12 to 14 leaves after transplant. Pinching should be given at the eight-leaf mark, which means you keep eight leaves and you remove four to six leaves at that pinch (see Figure 1 photo for reference). Another way to say this is when the plant has six nodes, pinch it down to four nodes.

Pinching does delay flowering by 10 to 14 days, but the multiple stems offer more value at retail. It produces super-appealing plants that will fly off the shelves.

PGRs are also necessary in the finishing stage. We recommend a paclobutrazol drench at 2 to 3 ppm two weeks after transplant for control. If grown under very high heat or humid conditions, higher rates or repeated applications of PGRs might be necessary.

128-cell plugs: 2 to 3 weeks

Container Size	Plugs/Pot (ppp)	Transplant to finish if not pinched*	Transplant to finish when pinched*
6-in. pot/gallon	1 ppp	6 to 7 weeks	8 to 9 weeks
8-in. pot/2 gallon	1 ppp	6 to 7 weeks	8 to 9 weeks
12-in. pot/5 gallon	1 to 3 ppp	7 to 8 weeks	9 to 10 weeks

*Add two weeks if plugs aren't grown under long days.

To sum up this new sunflower, Always Sunny Gold makes excellent cut flowers for fresh market programs and is excellent for use in new and existing landscape sunflower programs. The sturdy plants are long-blooming and we've counted well over 200 blooms from a single plant in a garden season.

Always Sunny Gold has won both Fleuroselect and All-America Selections awards for performance and appeal. It's also a new addition to the PanAmerican Seed ProLandscape Performers program and is a great choice to maximize color in the landscape. With the plant culture suggestions above, the best sunflowers will be sent to market with high consumer satisfaction. **GT**