

# GROWERTALKS

## Culture Notes

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## Tips for Sun Parasol Mandevilla

*Ellen C. Wells*



**Photo shown: Sun Parasol Giant Crimson**

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Sun Parasol mandevilla, from breeder Suntory Flowers in Japan (famous for Surfinia petunias, Tapien and Temari verbena and Million Bells calibrachoa), is a collection of varieties developed through crossbreeding. The Sun Parasols were first introduced to the North American market in 2003 and nine varieties are now available in three distinct groups: the original Sun Parasol group, the Giant group and the Pretty group.

Sun Parasol Crimson, in the original group, is the first red mandevilla on the market that stays true to color. Varieties within the groups are versatile in the home landscape and are ideal when used as patio and balcony plants, in hanging baskets and also in flowerbeds. A natural climber, Sun Parasol can be used in conjunction with trellises or other supports, can trail from pots, and can even be allowed to find support from other plants in the landscape.

### **Production Tips**

**Cultivation timetable.** Production time for a 3.5-in to 5-in. pot can take three months, and up to nine months for an 8- to 12-in. pot.

**Media.** Soil must be sufficiently free-draining but also water-retentive, with a low pH of 4.0 to 5.5.

**Temperature.** Sun Parasol likes warmth and will grow slowly in cool conditions. A temperature in the range of 60F to 68F is reasonable. The Giant group grows best under warm conditions, so they grow more quickly in summer and more slowly in winter. During winter, refrain from allowing the temperature to drop below 50F and also don't allow the soil to be too moist.

**Light.** The Giant group needs high light in the summer and winter. The Original and Pretty groups need high light during the winter months. However, high light during the summer can cause bud abortion. Provide partial shade to prevent this from occurring.

**Water.** Water sparingly in winter to prevent root rot in spring. During the summer months, water sufficiently to encourage growth but keep on the dry side during the flowering period to prevent long shoots from developing. If the plant is too dry, it will drop its leaves. If it's excessively wet, root rot will occur or growth will be too rapid.

**Feeding.** Moderate fertility is required with 200ppm of constant liquid feed using a complete fertilizer.

**Pinching.** Pinching is recommended to improve branching. Wait until the plants are fairly well rooted before pinching.

**Diseases and pests.** The main disease infections for mandevilla are fusarium, cercospora, phytophthora and colletotrichum. Pest problems can include red spider mite, mealybug, aphids, fungus gnats and shoreflies. Contact your supplier for up-to-date recommendations to treat these pests and diseases should you encounter any of them.

**Plant supports.** You can use any type of trellis or support for Sun Parasol. Vertical tying is less labor-intensive. Horizontal tying of branches generally produces shorter flowering shoots. Continuous tying is recommended.

**Transportation.** Mandevilla flowers are damaged by rubbing against anything. They must be packed well to prevent flower damage.

**Other pointers.** Flowering begins on every third leaf pair, measured from the base or from the previous flower. The bud is aborted under unfavorable conditions. Remove the shoot above the bud to prevent the bud from aborting.

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### **Sun Parasol Group Characteristics**

**Original Sun Parasol group:** Long-last flowers; good garden performance; varieties include Crimson, Pink, Dark Red and Cream Pink.

**Giant group:** Large flowers; coarser growth than original Sun Parasol group; delivery season slightly later than Sun Parasol; varieties include Giant White, Giant Pink and Giant Crimson.

**Pretty group:** Superior branching; vigorous growth; can be grown in smaller pots without support; varieties include Pretty Crimson and Pretty Pink.

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