

PLANTS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GROW

Begonia 'Metallic Mist'



Metallic Mist

'Metallic Mist' is an award-winning hardy begonia from Terra Nova Nurseries. In May, it won a blue ribbon from the American Begonia Society after it was awarded 96 out of 100 points as a "New Introduction by a Commercial Grower."

'Metallic Mist' is a hybrid of two Chinese species. It has heavily silvered, maple-like leaves. In late summer, pink flowers appear and contrast well with the foliage.

Plants can be used in containers or as accent plants in shady garden spots. This begonia likes cool roots so smaller containers won't work.

It is a vigorous grower that can reach 18 inches tall with a 2-foot width.

Plants are hardy in USDA Hardiness Zones 7b-9.

'Metallic Mist' prefers a well-draining, humus rich growing medium that is moist. The medium should be allowed to dry out slightly between waterings. Good drainage is a must.

Ideal medium pH is 6.0-7.0. Nutritional needs are moderate.

In a 4-inch container, plants will finish in four to six weeks.

FOR MORE: Terra Nova Nurseries, (800) 215-9450; www.terravanurseries.com.



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Pot carnation SuperTrouper



SuperTrouper Magenta + White



SuperTrouper Velvet + White

Abba is hot -- again. Thanks to the summer movie release of "Mamma Mia," I couldn't get the '70s band's tunes out of my head.

The marketing geniuses at Selecta First Class Plants were ready for one of the latest trends with the SuperTrouper series.

In 2001, Selecta released three Abba-influenced pot carnation series: MammaMia, DancingQueen and SuperTrouper.

The SuperTrouper series is still a star in the Selecta First Class line. It has a full color range with some great bicolors and solids. Flowers are nicely scented, too.

To grow the series for regular flowering (May or later), here are some tips.

Plants have a high demand for light. They prefer dry cultivation, so avoid a wet medium. Plants can be pinched after 10 to 14 days.

Some cultivars don't need a plant growth regulator. If needed, use 0.25 percent B-Nine or Bonzi one or two times to moisten plants only when shoots are 1 inch long.

When young plants are 3 inches tall, lower temperatures at 4 a.m. to 48°F for six hours. This "cool morning" may reduce the need for PGR treatments.

FOR MORE: Selecta First Class Plants, (760) 634-4341; www.firstclassplants.com.

Vinca Cora series



Cora Punch



Cora Pink

Goldsmith's Cora vinca series was one of the top performers at this year's field trial sites across the country.

The series, which debuted in 2007, loves the heat and is resistant to aerial *Phytophthora*. Plants have large flowers in a range of colors. They also have a uniform habit and flowering time.

The series can be sold in large containers (8- to 12-inch or 2- to 5-gallon), packs or small pots (4- to 6-inch).

The Cora series is day neutral. Temperatures above 72°F will hasten flower development.

Growing on in a 288-plug tray takes six to seven weeks.

The growing medium should have a pH of 5.5 with an electrical conductivity of 1.2-2. Provide 3,500-4,500 footcandles of light to hasten flower induction. Supplemental lighting under low-light conditions (350-450 footcandles) will enhance shoot and root growth. Under high-light conditions, apply an ammonium-based feed (17-5-17) at 100-150 parts per million nitrogen. Under low-light conditions, apply a calcium-based feed (14-4-14) at 100-150 ppm nitrogen. Iron can be beneficial at a rate of 2 ppm.

Keep temperatures at 70°F-74°F day and night. Control growth through moisture and temperature management. If needed, apply sprays of B-Nine at 2,500-5,000 ppm or A-Rest at 3-5 ppm.

FOR MORE: Goldsmith Seeds, (800) 549-0158; www.goldsmithseeds.com.

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