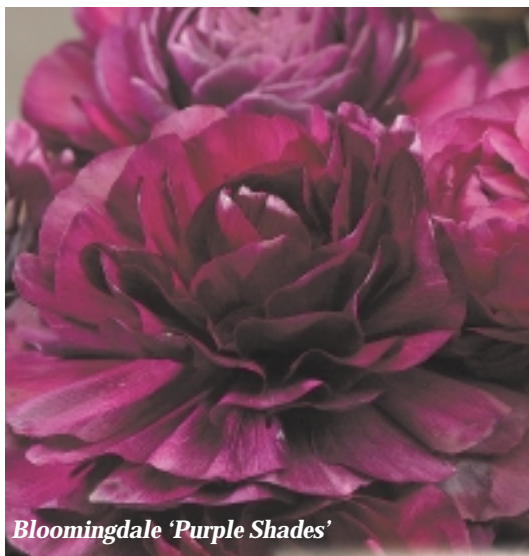


Ranunculus Bloomingdale



Bloomingdale 'Purple Shades'



Bloomingdale Mix



Bloomingdale 'Tangerine'

This double-flower plant now comes in a great new shade to complement the other eight colors.

By Corinne Marshall

Ranunculus Bloomingdale is not only a stunning variety, but an indispensable item for early spring sales. Its bowl-shaped flowers resemble small peonies and produce densely petaled blooms in nine colors: Pure Yellow, Tangerine, Golden Shades, Pink Shades, Red Shades, Rose Shades, White Shades, a mix and the new Purple Shades. The shade colors are very attractive with rich color variation on each plant. Suitable for 4-inch and larger pots, the large, full double flowers are borne on sturdy stems.

PLUG STAGE

Stage One (day 1-14). Use a sterilized soil media with plenty of organic matter, (a mixture of 30 percent peat and 70 percent perlite has been found to be highly efficient and accelerates germination and seedling growth. A pH of 6.0-6.5 is recommended for best results. Cover seed with a very thin layer of soil or peat/perlite mixture and water thoroughly. Select a well-ventilated environment and avoid strong sunlight. Place seed flats in the coolest possible location in the greenhouse, 50-60° F. Never allow the growing media to dry out until the seed germinates.

Stage Two (day 15-21). After seedlings begin to emerge, reduce moisture and place flats in a well-ventilated and shaded greenhouse (2,000-3,000 foot-candles) and maintain 55-60° F days and 40° F. Apply a light fertilizer of 100 ppm nitrogen to strengthen seedlings.

Stage Three (day 22-42). Maintain cool greenhouse conditions, and do not allow air temperatures to exceed 77° F during this period. Fertilize every 10 days with 100-150 ppm nitrogen and maintain EC levels between 0.7-1.0 (saturated

paste 2:1). Ranunculus is sensitive to excess salt levels so avoid stressing the plants with temperature and moisture.

Stage Four (day 43-50). Seedlings have developed four true leaves and are now ready for transplanting into pots. Ranunculus becomes reproductive at the fourth true leaf stage. Late transplanting creates smaller plants with poor foliage and plant body development.

GROWING ON

When seedlings reach the fourth true leaf stage, transplant them into 4- and 5-inch pots with a starting soil pH of 6.0-6.5. Select a highly fertile soil with good drainage, low in peat contents, with abundant organic matter and well-rotted leaf mulch. Initial growth after transplanting will be slow. It is important to maintain temperatures as low as possible, 55-60° F, never allowing daytime temperatures to exceed 77° F. Place one plant per 4-inch pot and three per 5-inch pot, being careful not to damage the delicate root system.


Approximately two months after sowing, plants will begin to grow rapidly. Ranunculus requires high nutrition. Either incorporate fertilizer into the potting medium or apply a commercial liquid feed every 7-10 days. Water thoroughly and regularly, and if grown with heat, monitor the temperature carefully. Young seedlings should not be subjected to long days, as this will cause the plants to form corms, resulting in insufficient growth and bud formation delay. Allow sufficient space between plants on benches to enable maximum growth at all times. Also, monitor boron carefully as Ranunculus is sensitive to low levels.

FINISHING

Approximately 1-1 1/2 months after potting, plants should grow to a reasonable size. Crop time from sowing is 5-5 1/2 months, depending on temperature. For early pot sales, maintain a daytime temperature of 60-68° F and a night temperature of 44-50° F.

At higher temperatures, both stems and leaves may show excessive growth. Applications of B-9 at the rate of 2,500 ppm will yield good results. B-9 should be applied when buds first show at the base of the plants. To control flower stem stretch, lower temperatures, regulate watering and provide good air circulation.

The most common insects are aphids, leaf miners and spider mites. Major diseases include wilt, Botrytis and powdery mildew, all of which can be controlled by spraying. Good culture and nutrition will create healthy plants that are less susceptible to disease.

Growers often wish to produce an early crop of Ranunculus, germinating and growing young plants in the heat and long days of summer. Under these conditions plant growth often stalls or plants produce weak growth. This is because under long days — greater than 13 hours daylength — Ranunculus want to produce corms rather than vegetative growth. Providing black out with 10-13 hours of day length will maintain active vegetative growth. 

Corinne Marshall is a marketing associate at Sakata Seed America Inc. She may be reached by E-mail at cmarshall@sakata.com.