Osteospermum Margarita Series

This uniform series boasts a wide range of color and continuous flowering through the summer.

By Joe Bergen

In the past few years, Fides' osteospermum Margarita series has become one of the most recognized osteospermum series on the market. Continuous improvements and the addition of some beautiful new colors have brought the series up to a whole new level.

The Margarita series is known for its minimal need for growth regulators (making it more environmentally friendly), fantastic natural branching habit and uniformity. Because of its wide range of colors, nice flower shape, good heat tolerance and continuous summer flowering, growers consider it a high-efficiency product with a high-quality output. For example, judges at the University of Georgia's trial gardens selected 'Margarita Purple' as a Plant of Merit in June 2010. 'Margarita Purple', 'Margarita Bronze Bicolor' and 'Margarita Dark Pink' were also recognized this year at Penn State University's trial gardens.

Because of these qualities, Margarita is an easy-to-maintain series for both growers and consumers.

Rooting Information

Margarita cuttings root at a temperature between 65° F and 70° F and a humidity level of 80 to 85 percent. When sticking the unrooted cuttings, use a rooting hormone (we recommend IBA) to support the development. You can use artificial lighting in addition to a rooting hormone to enhance rooting. The average rooting time is three to four weeks (with the exception of the yellow and bronze varieties, which require an additional week). Always use well-drained soil to prevent fungus.

Transplanting and Pinching

You can use one cutting per 4½-inch pot or gallon. For an 8-inch pot, use three cuttings for best results. Osteospermum Margarita also performs well in combination planters and 10-inch baskets. Because of the series' uniformity, you can easily use multiple colors in a pot, like the bronze colors for late summer production. Two weeks after potting, pinch out the tops of the plants, leaving three to four leaf pairs.

Growing Environment

The potting period regularly stretches from mid-January until late February. The ideal day temperature is 63-68° F and the ideal night temperature ranges from 55-60° F. High light and cool temperatures will produce the best quality. Mature plants, however, can be kept at 40-50° F. Margarita varieties love maximum light intensity; avoid overhead shading.

Fertilization

The basics for fertilization are the main elements nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. A mixture of these basic fertilizers can be used during the entire production period. It is recommended to give higher phosphorous content in the beginning and to give more potassium towards the end of the production period.

It depends on the growing method, which EC should be used when watering. In general, a higher EC is given when growing dryer as compared to growing wet. Keep the EC between 2.0 and 2.5. The recommended pH level is 5.8-6.2.

Growth Regulators

As opposed to other osteospermum series, the Margarita series varieties need fewer growth regulators because this series is naturally compact and has excellent branching. During production, you will need, on average, less than two applications of growth regulators, depending on desired pot size and growing climate.

Regular growth regulators can be used in the amounts recommended on the label, At the end of production, daminozide is usually applied once because of its effect on the flower stalks.

It is also possible to apply one of many natural growth inhibitors, such as negative DIF (early-morning temperature drop).

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Margarita Timing

In general, osteospermum Margarita follows the timing below.

Pot size	Plants per pot	Total crop time
4- to 5-inch	1	Nine weeks
6-inch	1	10 weeks
8-inch	3	10 weeks
10-inch basket	3-4	12 weeks
12-inch basket	5	15 weeks

For late-summer production, see the planting schedule below. The timing in the schedule below is based on transplanting a pinched liner.

Pot size	Plants per pot	Plant date	Flowering
Quart	1	8/1	Early/mid-Sept.
Gallon	1	7/19	Early/mid-Sept.
8-inch	3	7/12	Early/mid-Sept.
10-inch	3-4	7/5	Early/mid-Sept.