

PETUNIA

Littletonia Series

THIS SUN-LOVING MINIATURE-FLOWER SERIES PRESENTS ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES IN PATIO COMBINATIONS, LANDSCAPES, HANGING BASKETS, WINDOW BOXES AND MORE. **By Chanochi Zaks**

Littletunia, a miniature-flower petunia hybrid from Danziger “Dan” Flower Farm, is sensational for early spring sales and beyond. The series is a great alternative to calibrachoa, which can be sensitive to higher pH. Expect a mounded habit combined with a profusion of continuous color all season long.

Littletonia varieties are known for great garden performance, dependable plant vigor, excellent heat tolerance and improved disease resistance. Plants are covered with lovely miniature blossoms from spring to fall. Flowers are approximately 1½

inches in diameter. Tested in more than 25 private and university trials throughout the United States, Littletonia continues to receive excellent ratings.

The series includes a wide variety of colors: Bicolor Black, Bicolor Illusion, Blue Vein, Breezy Pink, Merlot, Pink, Pink Vein, Purple, Purple Blue, Red Energy, Red Star, Rose, Shiraz, Sweet Dark Pink, Sweet Sherbet, Ultra Purple and White Grace.

Littletonia features a beautiful naturally compact habit — no plant growth regulators are required. Added to that, superior center branching creates endless possibilities in patio combinations, borders, landscapes, hanging baskets, window

boxes and pots of all sizes. Additionally, Littletonias excel in any high-profile area where concentrated color is desired, and they are star performers in the garden and landscape as well.

Littletonia is an extremely fast crop. In just four weeks you can finish a 4-inch pot with only one rooted cutting. They are also self-cleaning, self-maintaining, sun-loving and easy to grow, making Littletonia appealing for the commercial grower and the consumer alike.

Culture

Root for four weeks at propagation temperatures of 72° F. After roots develop, cool to 65 to 68° F. Plant one cutting per 4-inch pot for finishing in four to five weeks. Six-inch pots may be planted with one cutting for six to seven weeks finish or three cuttings for five to six weeks finish. Plant three or four cuttings per 8- to 10-inch pot, and expect finishing in seven to nine weeks. For 10 inch hanging baskets, plant three to four cuttings, and plants will be ready for sale in 10 to 12 weeks.

Immediately after transplant, water and fertilize in moderation. Maintain electrical conductivity (EC) at 1.5 to 1.8. Let roots reach the side of the container before increasing fertilizer and water.

Media

Use a well-drained, sterile peat/perlite mix with a pH range of 5.5 to 6.2. Maintain EC levels of 0.8 to 1.2.

Irrigation

Plants can be sensitive to overwatering. Allow soil to dry between irrigations. Poorly draining soil, lack of oxygen or overwatering can cause foliar chlorosis that can mimic the yellowing caused by iron deficiency. Drip irrigation is recommended. Leach periodically to prevent salt accumulation.



‘Littletonia Blue Vein’



‘Littletonia Red Energy’

Fertilization

Littletonias thrive on heavy fertilization. Apply a constant, balanced feed of a balanced fertilizer with 250- to 300-ppm nitrogen. Deficiencies of iron, manganese and magnesium can cause chlorotic foliage. To avoid unsightly yellowing, make sure your fertilizer formulation includes these elements.

Temperature

Producing best in moderate temperatures, Littletonias prefer days of 65 to 70° F and nighttime temperatures of 50 to 60° F.

Light

Littletonia prefers high light for an optimum finish. Provide a minimum of 6,000 foot-candles. They will benefit from supplemental lighting under low light conditions. Maintain light levels above 4,000 foot-candles during the latter part of winter. This will promote more compact plants as well as better flowering.

Photoperiod Response & Management

Littletonias are day neutral. To promote flowering, provide a four-hour night interruption before week 14, or extend long days to at least 13 hours. Seven to eight weeks from the long days start date, plants typically flower.

Pinching

Though Littletonias don't need pinching, you could pinch after plants become well established, about two weeks after planting. For baskets, a second pinch is recommended. Instead of pinching, cutting plants is also an option.

Plant Growth Regulators


Petunias grow quickly as time passes. Both low light and warm temperatures can induce stretching. During these times, daminozide (B-Nine), paclobutrazol (Bonzi) and uniconazole (Sumagic) are effective options. To encourage optimum shelf life in finished pots, consider an application for toning as well. Always read and follow label requirements.

Insects & Diseases

Maintain a vigilant scouting and monitoring program to prevent any

insect and disease activity. Particularly watch for insects including thrips, aphids and whiteflies. Excessive moisture can cause Botrytis and Pythium. Also, be aware that stressed roots can yellow and resemble nutrient deficiency.

Maintain moderate humidity levels and good air circulation as a preventative. Drench with a

broad-spectrum fungicide at liner planting to avoid root rot and other issues. 

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