

## Culture Tips for **Easy Wave Petunias**



These 'Easy Wave' petunias are simple to produce, hence the name — maybe even "easier" than traditional petunias.

By Scott Rusch

**I**n the world of spreading petunias, Wave petunias are one of the most consumer-recognized brands, and California Pack Trials 2002 brought us the new Easy Wave series of spreading petunias. An alternative to traditional petunias, Easy Waves offer easy-to-flower plants with great retail impact and minimal maintenance requirements. They are available in four colors: Pink, Shell Pink, Cherry and White.

Easy Wave petunias have day-neutral characteristics, making them easy to flower under short days. Easy Waves give growers the ability to produce quality spreading petunias for the winter market because the plants will remain in flower under the shorter days of winter. They also require less plant growth regulators; Easy Waves can be grown with the same PGR schedule used on standard petunias in most areas.

Easy Wave petunias can be produced in packs and small containers without heavy spacing or tangled branches. PanAmerican recommends the use of 4-inch or 1801 containers.

### GERMINATION

Because their spreading habit begins after transplanting, you can produce Easy Wave plugs like other petunias. Use a well-drained, disease-free seedling medium with a pH of 5.5-6.0 and EC approximately 0.75 mmhos/cm (1:2 extraction). Easy Wave seed does not need to be covered, but a light cov-

ering is beneficial if humidity cannot be controlled during germination.

Germinate seed at a temperature of 72-76° F while maintaining 100 percent relative humidity (RH). The RH can be reduced gradually to approximately 50 percent after the cotyledons emerge. Light is not required for uniform germination but may give growers even better results. Because Easy Wave seed is pelleted, it is beneficial to apply above-average amounts of soil moisture during Stage 1 to melt the pellet completely.

At radicle emergence, fertilize with a low phosphorus-nitrate solution at a rate of 50 ppm nitrogen. Grow the plugs at a temperature of 65-70° F and increase fertilizer levels to 100-150 ppm nitrogen. Maintain a medium EC between 1.0 and 1.5 mmhos/cm (1:2 extraction). As the plugs reach maturity, growth regulators will be needed to produce the highest-quality product. Apply one application of 5,000 ppm B-Nine during Stage 3 and another at Stage 4. If the plugs need to be held, keep temperatures between 60-65° F.


### GROWING ON

Easy Wave petunias are a quick, grower-friendly crop — just nine weeks from sow to finish in a 4-inch container (summer production). Use a well-drained, disease-free, soilless medium with a pH of 5.5-6.3 and a medium initial nutrient charge. Maintain night temperatures of 55-65° F and day temperatures of 65-75° F.

Easy Wave petunias require more fertilizer than is usually recommended for standard petunias. For best results, apply a balanced fertilizer with every second or third irrigation — 200-250 ppm nitrogen. Easy Wave petunias benefit from regular plant growth regulator treatments. In northern Illinois, four weekly applications (starting one week after transplant) of 5,000 ppm B-Nine produced a quality finished product. This is the same PGR treatment used on standard petunias in this area.

### FINISHING

For spring production, growers should allow 12 weeks (sow to finish) in 1801- or 306-size packs and 4- to 6-inch containers, adding one week of production time to finish a 10-inch basket. Allow nine weeks (sow to finish) in summer to produce in 1801- or 306-size packs and 4- to 6-inch containers, again adding one week to finish a 10-inch basket.

If finishing a 4-inch container from plugs, allow six weeks in summer from a 392-plug and 8-9 weeks under shorter days. Transplant one plant per 1801, 306 or 4-inch container; 1-3 plants per 6-inch; and 4-5 plants per 10-inch basket. 

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