

Avalanche Petunias



'Avalanche Tropical Red'



'Avalanche Pink'

Avalanche offers numerous grower-friendly characteristics.

By Jason Riley

The Avalanche series was the first trailing seed petunia to be manageable on the bench, flower under short days and require less PGR applications. Further, an unparalleled color range including two reds was, and still is, the crowning jewel to this class.

GERMINATION

Germinate pelleted seed at 70-75° F, uncovered. Expect germination to occur approximately one week after sow, depending on environmental conditions. Move stage 2 plugs out of the germination chamber or house and into the greenhouse to under 30- to 50-percent shade, and maintain 70° F night temperature. At stages 3 and 4, plugs will happily withstand relatively high light levels as long as watering practices are monitored closely. Temperatures during stage 4 may be reduced to tone the plugs. Be wary of Botrytis outbreaks.

Avalanche plugs may be held for a period of time. Control stretch with either B-nine or Bonzi at 1,500-2,500 ppm or 3-8 ppm (spray), respectively. Bonzi is especially effective and should be used by experienced growers, as similar rates under varying environmental conditions may have different results.

GROWING ON

Avalanche petunias are suitable for finishing in 4-inch pots to 12-inch hanging baskets for three primary reasons: 1) They are well behaved, yielding a much longer bench life; 2) they flower and sell very early; and 3) they are quite floriferous over the whole plant, not just at the terminal ends of lateral growth. Their well-mounded and full habit is particularly conducive to premium hang-

ing basket production. Each of these attributes makes for a superior final product that will sell quickly, no matter the pot size.

Grow Avalanche on at 65-70° F day temperature and 58-65° F night temperature. Avoid high day temperatures, as this will only stimulate excessive stretch due to a high positive DIF. Average daily temperatures may be dropped closer to sell date to intensify flower colors, maintain or increase flower size, and extend bench life.

Avalanche petunias are more behaved than other trailing seed petunias but may still require PGR applications to tone and/or augment their habit. For 4-inch production, B-nine at 3,500-5,000 ppm may be applied 1-2 times during the crop cycle depending on climate. Late applications of B-nine may delay flowering by one week. Although it is generally not necessary for Avalanche petunias, Bonzi at a 10- to 30-ppm spray may also be applied once visible bud stage is achieved. PGR applications are usually not necessary for Avalanche basket production.

Avalanches aren't particularly fussy. Maintain relatively low EC levels (about 1.0 mmhos), and fertilize conservatively so as to limit excessive growth. About 150-200 ppm nitrogen should suffice. Limit your application of fertilizers high in ammonical or urea nitrogen, as this will only stimulate quick, soft growth. Alternating 20-10-20 with 15-0-15 should yield good results. Maintain pH levels around 6.0.

Sow to transplant generally requires 5-6 weeks

depending on your climate. Flowering occurs quite early and is not an accurate barometer of total crop time, while weeks to fill out the final container is. For 4-inch pots, an additional 4-5 weeks from transplant are required for finishing. For 10-inch hanging baskets at three plugs per pot and 12-inch baskets at four plugs per pot, 5-7 weeks from transplant are required.

PESTS/DISEASES

Avalanches are generally insect free. Scout for occasional whitefly infestations and spray accordingly. As for diseases, Pythium poses the primary threat. The best defenses against root diseases such as Pythium are good watering practices. Allow soil to become moderately dry between irrigations. Subdue Maxx applied as a preventative or curative, generally works well for Pythium control.

Avalanche is easy, quick, floriferous and versatile. It is also a great choice for combination pots, where it won't overwhelm accompanying plants, only enhance them. Currently comprised of nine colors — Cherry, Lavender, Lilac, Pink, Red, Rose, Salmon Shades, Tropical Red and White — most any theme or color combination may be developed with the Avalanche. **GPN**

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Why Avalanche Petunias

I know what you're thinking: petunias? What's so special about petunias? Well, as you know, petunias are one of the most popular bedding plants in the United States, and the proliferation of trailing series has only raised the numbers. As much as we like featuring new things, in the end, there are always millions of consumers demanding petunias.

It is common knowledge that trailing petunias can be a dog on the bench, growing into each other and causing a tangled mess. You won't have this problem with the Avalanche series, and they won't take as much bench space as other trailing petunias. Fairly cheap and easy to grow, fast crop time and a heavy demand. If you do it right and make a couple of turns, the Avalanche series can be a high-quality, profitable crop, which isn't usually the case with this commodity.



— Carrie Burns