

perennial
solutions

By Paul Pilon

Geum coccineum
'Cooky'

With its cheerful burst of color and ease of production, 'Cooky' offers untapped potential to jump start your early sales.

Many growers are looking for a perennial that is easy to produce and provides a bright, cheerful display of color to supplement their early- to mid-season product lines. *Geum* 'Cooky' is a great perennial for early sales and is largely underutilized by commercial growers. 'Cooky' produces pleasing bright-orange toned flowers atop short 12-inch stems above attrac-

tive evergreen mounds of hairy, coarse-pinnately lobed leaves. With its compact growing habit, first-year flowering and ease of production, 'Cooky' is well suited for commercial growers.

Geum coccineum belongs to the Rosaceae family, which includes only a few commercially produced perennials, including alchemilla, aruncus, filipendula, potentilla and prunus. 'Cooky' is commonly used as a bed and border perennial near wooded areas and also can be planted in containers or used as cut flowers. In the landscape, they are resistant to rabbit feeding and attract butterflies to the gardens. They perform well across much of USDA Hardiness Zones 4 to 9 and AHS Heat Zones 9 to 3, where they prefer to be grown under partial shade, although they can tolerate some full sun.

Propagation

Geum 'Cooky' is available from Benary Seeds as Apex seed, which is treated to provide growers with improved germination, increased uniformity and more transplantable plugs.

'Cooky' is commonly sown in 288- or 220-cell plug trays. Light is required for germination; do not cover the seed with germination mix or vermiculite after sowing. Moisten the seed flats and move them into a warm environment, where the temperatures can be maintained at 64-68° F for germination. Keep the media slightly moist but not wet during germination. It is best to germinate them in a chamber where uniform moisture levels and temperatures can be maintained. Using a germi-

nation chamber will also increase both the germination rate and percent germination.

The seeds should be germinated in 10 to 15 days after sowing. Several growers apply a very light covering after the radicals have emerged. Once germinated, they can be grown at temperatures of 62-66° F. Following germination, reduce the moisture levels somewhat, allowing the growing medium to dry out slightly before watering to help promote rooting. Fertilizers can be applied once the true leaves are present, applying 100-ppm nitrogen every third irrigation or 50 ppm with every irrigation, using a balanced water-soluble source. When the plugs are grown at 64° F, they are usually ready for transplanting in seven to nine weeks.

Production

Geum 'Cooky' is often produced in 1-gallon or smaller-sized containers. Growers commonly use a single plug transplanted into small container sizes, or when fall planting, large container sizes. When spring planting vernalized plugs, it is recommended that growers transplant two plugs per gallon container to fill it out. When transplanting, the growing medium should be even with the top of the plug. They perform best when grown in a moist, well-drained medium with a slightly acidic pH: 5.8-6.4. *Geum* requires an average amount of irrigation and does not tolerate overly wet or dry conditions. Keep them moist but not consistently wet.

Geums are light to moderate feeders. Growers commonly



'Cooky's' bright-orange toned flowers provide a stunning burst of color in the landscape. (Photos: Benary Seeds)

CultureConnection

deliver nutrients using either a constant liquid fertilization program, feeding at rates of 75- to 100-ppm nitrates, or a controlled release fertilizer incorporated at a rate equivalent to ¾ to 1 pound of nitrogen per yard of growing medium.

Given their compact growth habit, it is usually not necessary to control the plant height. However, during periods of low light levels, when grown at high plant densities, or when grown with luxury nutrient levels, excessive plant

growth (plant width) might occur requiring some type of height-management strategy. The growth of 'Cooky' can often be reduced by providing adequate spacing between the plants. It may be necessary, although not common, to

POINT OF VIEW

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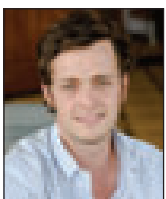


MARY RICHARDSON
Burnett's Landscaping
(CT)

My Business:
Landscape Design/Build

I've been attending for: 20 years

"I've become aware that a little piece of ANLA, the Management Clinic, and the people I've met there is incorporated into things we do every day. Things we talk to people about just naturally get rolled into the way we do business. We use Clinic to reinforce and fine-tune what we do – and I think we are really good at what we do! A lot of that is ideas from Clinic that we have incorporated over the years."



JOSEPH HILLENMEYER
Joseph Hillenmeyer
& Associates (KY)

My Business:
Landscape Design/Build

I've been attending for: 9 years

"After nine years of attending the Management Clinic I continue to come away refreshed and recharged for the new year. Last year four members of my company attended and we all came home with new ideas - helping us have our best year to date! The Clinic will always be a "must attend" event for our company especially now; with economic times tough. This is the most important time to find the ideas that will set us apart from our competition."



JON REELHORN
Belmont Nursery (CA)

My Business: Growing/
Landscape Distribution/
Retail

I've been attending for: 7 years

"ANLA's Management Clinic is the one event we point to and try to get our key people to attend. It gives us the best bang for our buck. The beauty of it is that we always get two or three things that we can implement that year. We've attended for seven years and typically bring five people. That's 105 new things that we do. It has transformed our business. It is invaluable and you just can't get that somewhere else."



LORI HARMS
Countryside Flower
Shop, Nursery &
Garden Center (IL)

My Business: Retail

I've been attending for: 10 years

"The Management Clinic is my jump start for the season. We bring the owners along with several managers, taking advantage of the Clinic special: pay for 4 and get the 5th registration free. We all leave with too many new ideas! We use the 6 hour drive home to discuss and select the top 3 ideas that we can implement immediately in our business, the top 5 ideas that we can work on long range and one single improvement we can each make on a personal level."



TOM DEMALINE
Willoway Nurseries
(OH)

My Business: Growing/
Landscape Distribution

I've been attending for: 17 years

"I attend ANLA's Management Clinic for self enrichment, networking with my peers, and to stay on the cutting edge of emerging industry issues and trends. We bring our team members to give them a better perspective of the industry. This has allowed them to grow as managers and understand what it takes to be an industry leader. Many sessions have been the catalyst to implementing improvements. The Clinic helped to launch our marketing efforts by giving us a better understanding of what our retail customers' needs are."



GARY BLONDELL
Master Nursery
Gary's Gardens (MD)

My Business: Retail

I've been attending for: 8 years

"Mary, my wife and partner, and I have come to realize that attending the ANLA Management Clinic over the past 8 years has played a major part in successfully improving the way we operate our business on a daily basis. As owners of a small, independent garden center, at first we were a little intimidated by such an event, but after attending our first Clinic we found a certain refuge, camaraderie, and valuable networking amongst fellow businesses (now friends) both large and small."



Geum coccineum are ideal for early season sales.

use chemical plant growth regulators to control their growth. In the northern parts of the country, applying spray applications of paclobutrazol (Bonzi, Paczol or Piccolo) at 30 ppm or uniconazole (Concise or Sumagic) at 5 ppm is recommended. One to two applications seven days apart should give adequate height control.

Insects and Diseases

Aphids, leafminers and spider mites are commonly observed feeding on geum. Of these insects, aphids are the most problematic. Preventive control measures are not needed; the presence of these pests can be detected through routine scouting, and if necessary, control measures can be implemented.

There are a number of disease organisms known to infect geum, including Botrytis, downy mildew, powdery mildew, root rots and rust diseases. Similar to controlling insects, plant pathogens are often not problematic for growers; early signs of these diseases can be detected with routine crop monitoring. To prevent the occurrence of these diseases, it is best to manage the environment by providing proper plant spacing and adequate air movement, controlling humidity, monitoring the salt levels of the growing mix, and providing proper irrigation practices.

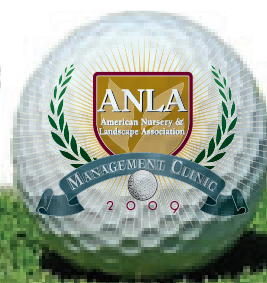
Forcing

Geum 'Cooky' is easy to force into bloom, and is most commonly produced for early spring sales. They will flower the first year from seed, but produce more

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flowers when they have been overwintered or vernalized. 'Cooky' does not have a cold requirement, but cold is beneficial and will reduce the time to flower slightly, improve the uniformity of bloom and increase the number of flowers produced. Geum 'Cooky' is classified as a day neutral plant and will flower under any photoperiod.

Following vernalization, they bloom very quickly and can be easily grown for early season sales. To obtain full, flowering plants for spring sales, it is beneficial to plant them during the late summer of the previous season. Transplant plugs into the desired container during late August to early September, bulk them up before winter, overwinter them and force them to bloom in the early spring.

The time to bloom after vernalization is a function temperature. 'Cooky' grown at 65° F will take approximately seven weeks to reach flowering, while plants grown at 58° F will flower in nine weeks. Growers should note it will require an additional two to three weeks of production time to produce flowering plants when non-vernalized starting materials are used. Producing them at cooler temperatures increases the time to flower, but will improve the overall quality characteristics of the plant, such as the color intensity of the foliage and flowers.

Availability

Geum coccineum 'Cooky' is available to the industry as seeds, plugs or finished containers. The seed is supplied by Benary Seeds (www.benary.com) and available through

many seed distributors. Plugs can be acquired from Swift Greenhouses, Inc. (www.swiftgreenhouses.com) or from several reputable plant brokers. **GPN**

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sultant, owner of Perennial Solutions Consulting (www.perennial-solutions.com), and author of Perennial Solutions: A Grower's Guide to Perennial Production. He can be reached at (616) 366-8588 or paul@perennial-solutions.com.

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Geum 'Cooky' will flower the first year from seed, but produce more flowers when they have been over-wintered or vernalized.

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