

Pansy Balconita Series



'Balconita Cheeky Yellow'



'Balconita Sky Blue & Yellow'



'Balconita Deep Red'

A revolutionary breeding breakthrough, these vegetative large-flowered trailing pansies are great for premium early-season hanging basket production.

By Mike Fernandez

The Balconita pansy series was bred by David Kerley and is offered by Oro Farms. The series consist of five colors: Cheeky Yellow, Deep Red, Meridian Blue, Sky Blue & Yellow, and White Surprise. Balconitas were bred to be trailing and produced in premium hanging baskets and patio pots. Balconitas are great for early spring production and could be the earliest sales in the garden center. Balconita pansies can take a frost and freeze so they are a safe bet for early sales. Cheeky Yellow and Sky Blue & Yellow have faced flowers and Deep Red, Meridian Blue and White have solid flowers. Balconitas are also good for fall color baskets and pots and will have the same tough performance as regular pansies. Good companion plants are kale, dianthus, snapdragons, petunias and many other cool crops. If planted in fall, flowers should last until winter in most areas.

Scheduling

Liners should be stuck one per cell in a well-drained soil and put under mist at 68 to 70° F. Pansies like temperatures cooler than most vegetative crops and should be taken out of propagation and cooled down as soon as possible. When grown for fall sales, shade will be needed to take off the edge of the summer temperatures.

Spray a fungicide to protect from Botrytis the day of sticking. To avoid unwanted stretch in propagation, spray 2,500-ppm B-Nine (daminozide) the day after sticking. This works because B-Nine is absorbed through the leaves.

After roots develop, remove from mist and finish liners in cooler temperatures at 60 to 65° F. Pinch in the third week after sticking to promote branching. Liners should be ready to transplant in four to five weeks. Feed as needed 50- to 100-ppm nitrogen as needed. Feed formulation should be selected by the quality of your water. The pH of the soil should test 5.8 to 6.2 using a 2-to-1 soil test. EC should test .80 to .90 using the same test. Frequent PGRs may be needed in growing the liner to avoid stretch.

Transplanting

Transplant three to four liners in a 10-inch basket or pot. Be sure to not plant too deep. Make sure crown is above the soil line. Spray for Botrytis after transplanting to avoid issues. Water in well at transplanting, and on next watering feed 100-

150-ppm nitrogen. Your feed formulation should be selected by the quality of your water. The pH in the soil should be 5.8 to 6.2, and EC should be 1.0 to 1.2.


Take care when pulling from trays for transplanting. Pansies will break easily when pulling out of tray, so a plug extractor would help to avoid this problem. Liners should be well toned and under control when transplanted. A well-toned liner will produce the best quality finished product. Balconitas can also be grown outside. In hot months, shade at 30 to 50 percent may be needed to keep cool. Once temperatures cool off, remove the shade and give as much light as possible. Water as needed and do not allow too wilt. Excessive wilting can cause damage. A weekly soil test is recommended to check pH and EC.

Growth Regulation

Pansies respond well to most growth regulators. I find that a combination of 2,500-ppm B-Nine and 5-ppm A-Rest (ancymidol) as a tank mix works well to control pansies at all stages. B-Nine alone at 5,000 ppm can be used as well. Bonzi (paclobutrazol) also works well at the finished stage once the baskets or pots have reached finished size. All regulator applications should be made following the label provided by the manufacturer of the chemical being used.

Insects and Disease Control

Pansies are blessed with having few insect and disease issues. Things to watch for are aphids, whitefly and thrips. Sticky cards should be used to monitor insect populations. A wide range of chemicals and biological controls can be used.

Diseases to watch for are Botrytis, Pythium and Thelaviopsis. Regular preventive spray programs can help to avoid these issues. The best control for Thelaviopsis is good sanitation and pH control. Most of these issues will happen in warmer temperatures and are limited when grown cool as recommended. If a disease is suspected, send samples to the university pathology lab of your choice. Once you receive the diagnosis, keep a copy and a digital photo so that you can refer to it in the future if this problem ever returns. 

Mike Fernandez is sales manager and technical support for Oro Farms. He can be reached at mike@orofarms.com or 315.396.6684.