

Ipomoea Bright Ideas Series

Available in three brilliant colors, Bright Ideas ipomoea are an exciting addition to combination planters as well as flowerbeds.



From top: 'Bright Ideas Rusty Red', 'Bright Ideas Black', 'Bright Ideas Lime'.

Bright Ideas is a new series of ipomoea, bred by Floranova and selected by Oro Farms, that consists of three colors: 'Bright Ideas Lime', 'Bright Ideas Black' and 'Bright Ideas Rusty Red'. All three Bright Ideas varieties are bred to be compact and can be grown with little to no PGRs. With this truly compact habit they can be grown in pot-tight production as an accent plant. Bright Ideas can also be used in mixed containers as one of the component plants that will not take over the combination. Each variety will add color and texture to the combination. Bright Ideas will also add color to plantings in flowerbeds but will not take over.

Rooting

Rooting ipomoea can be an easy process if all the steps are followed. Ipomoea should be put at the front of your sticking priority list; it is sensitive to cold and susceptible to possible damage in shipping due to the cold temperatures at the time of year we have to produce it. Ipomoea cuttings should not be stored at temperatures cooler than 58° F. No rooting hormone is necessary on this crop. Root at 70-72° F soil temperature. Mist as needed and do not allow to wilt down too much. With the right temperature, rooting should take five to seven days. A low nitrogen feed at 50 ppm from a 17-5-17 fertilizer may be beneficial in the mist. A preventative fungicide spray is recommended the day of sticking to reduce the risk of Botrytis damage.

Use a clean well-drained soil with a starting pH of 5.5-6.0. Shade newly stuck cuttings in high light. A well-rooted liner that will be able to transplant should take about four weeks from sticking. A soft pinch in the third week after sticking may be beneficial to help promote branching but isn't necessary especially in smaller pots. PGRs should not be needed in the liner stage, but if necessary, ipomoea responds well to most plant growth regulators. Supplemental lighting can be beneficial, especially in Northern states.

A preventative spray program is recommended to protect from spider mites and aphids. Allow to dry between irrigations and avoid excessive watering in low light due to the risk of Oedema as in all ipomoeas.

Transplanting

When transplanting Bright Ideas, as with all ipomoeas, they should be transplanted deep enough so the stem will not be floppy. Transplant them up to the first set of leaves. Care should be taken when liners are pulled from

the trays; a plug dislodger is best. Water in thoroughly with a balanced feed at 100- to 200-ppm nitrogen. A preventative fungicide spray after transplanting can help to avoid any fungal issues due to transplant damage.

Finishing

Bright Ideas ipomoea can be used in a wide range of pot sizes. Crop time will vary according to the pot size and temperature. A 4-inch pot will take anywhere from three to five weeks, and a 10-inch hanging basket will finish in six to seven weeks.

Plant in a clean well-drained soil. The pH in the soil should start around 5.5-6.0. Maintain a soil pH of 5.8-6.2 and an EC of .90-1.2 using a two-to-one soil test. Water as needed with a constant feed of 80- to 150-ppm constant feed. Formulation of the fertilizer should be determined by a regular water test. No pinching in the finished stage should be necessary due to the natural compactness of these varieties. Grow at 65-72° F. Heat means development, so the more you give the faster they will grow.

As in all crops, plants should be monitored for growth rate to determine if a PGR is needed. Although this is unlikely, you should determine this yourself. A preventative insecticide spray at this stage is recommended to prevent spider mites and aphids. Scouting is the best way to help prevent this issue. Avoid excessive watering in this stage as well to avoid issues with Oedema. Although Oedema will not kill the plant, it does leave an unsightly corky residue on the leaves.

In combination planters and combination baskets, Bright Ideas should give the other plants in the combination a chance to grow and not get overcome like with most other ipomoeas. If they are growing a little faster than the others, a pinch can be used to grow the other plants to size. It is unlikely that this technique will be needed.

Avoid cold temperatures in shipping. Ipomoea is a heat-loving plant and will wilt in cold temperatures. They are best programmed in later shipments. In lime-colored ipomoeas, bleaching of leaves in high light can be seen; normally this happens going from the greenhouse right out into the sun. The new leaves that come out after the bleaching will be fine. Place in a partially shaded area in the garden center to avoid this problem. **GPN**

Mike Fernandez is sales manager and technical support for Oro Farms. He can be reached at mike@orofarms.com or (315) 396-6684.