



Celosia Fresh Look

Find out why the two varieties in this series are both award winners.

By Niles Riese

The Fresh Look series offers season long garden color. 'Fresh Look Red' and 'Fresh Look Yellow' thrive in the summer heat and humidity with drought and rain tolerance, making them perfect for mass planting in beds or mixed containers. The Fresh Look colors always have a new appearance, needing no grooming in the garden. When grown in full sun, both Red and Yellow grow 12-18 inches tall and spread 12-20 inches.

Fresh Look Red won the Fleuroselect Gold Medal for its consistent performance with minimal maintenance required. It covers up spent plumes by producing new foliage and blooms. The plumes of Fresh Look Red are a rosy red color. The central plume can be 8-10 inches tall and 5 inches wide.

Fresh Look Yellow, an AAS Winner, has golden yellow plumes that are produced in abundance. It offers season-long garden color with little additional care needed in the garden.

Both Fresh Look colors can be used as bedding plants, cut flowers in mixed arrangements or dried flowers in an everlasting bouquet. These varieties also look exceptional in mass plantings. They are drought tolerant and can be planted in combinations with other drought tolerant varieties.

Fresh Look can be grown in a wide range of containers from jumbo cell packs to 4- to 8-inch containers. In the garden it is incredibly robust with excellent garden performance, flowering all summer long with long-lived flowers. In the landscape it offers impact and bright colors. For growers, celosias are relatively easy to grow provided you keep the plants growing avoiding having to hold the plants in check.

GERMINATION

Sow the seed into a well-drained, disease-free media that has good water-holding capacity. The seed does not need to be covered, but if conditions require it, use coarse vermiculite. Maintain relative humidity levels at 90-95 per-

cent. Seeds should germinate in 7-14 days at a soil temperature of 72-77° F.

TRANSPLANT

Move the plug trays into Stage II conditions to promote stem and cotyledon development. Maintain temperatures at 72-75° F, and increase light levels to 500-1,000 foot-candles. Begin fertilizing with 30-50 ppm nitrogen, taking care to avoid excessive soluble salts. Maintain uniform soil moisture. Stage II will take 7-9 days.

During Stage III, begin reducing temperatures gradually to 64-68° F, and increase light levels to 1,500-2,000 foot-candles. Increase fertilizer rates to 100 ppm with a balanced fertilizer. Maintain soil EC levels between 0.75 and 1.0. Avoid big fluctuations in the soil moisture.

Air temperature can be lowered to 60-65° F during Stage IV. Continue to feed plugs with 100 ppm nitrogen in an ammonia-based mix that is also rich in phosphorus and potassium. Continue to maintain uniform soil moisture levels. Keep plugs actively growing to prevent premature flower initiation in the plug trays. Maintain light levels in the plug stage below 2,500 foot-candles to avoid flower initiation before the plants have reached a sufficient size. Premature flowering can result in poor pack and garden performance. Be sure to transplant the plugs on time to prevent checking the growth.


GROWING ON

Plant one plug per cell pack or 4-inch pot



and up to three plugs in 6- to 8-inch pots. Grow in a disease-free, well-drained media with a pH of 5.5-6.0. Grow on at 60-65° F. Celosia is a heat-loving plant and does not tolerate cool temperatures during the growing stage. Low temperatures can cause premature flowering and can result in poor garden performance. Fertilize weekly with a well-balanced fertilizer at 150-220 ppm nitrogen.

If growth regulators are required, A-Rest, B-Nine, Bonzi and Cycocel are effective. B-Nine may be applied two weeks after transplanting and reapplied every 7-10 days as needed. Cycocel may cause leaf damage so do not apply late in the production cycle.

Aphids, spider mites and whiteflies may become a pest problem, while Botrytis, Pythium and Rhizoctonia may be disease problems. 

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Why Fresh Look?

Celosia is back — with a vengeance. Celosia decreased in popularity a while ago, so when Benary introduced Fresh Look, it made sure everyone knew what a great crop it is. Each color has won an award. 'Fresh Look Red', the Fleuroselect Gold Medal; and 'Fresh Look Yellow', an All America Selections winner. So, why is it so great? Mostly because of its garden performance, which doesn't affect you directly, but it affects your customers and their consumers. And as its popularity will grow with consumers and retailers because of its garden performance, so will its demand. It is a great choice for you too, because celosias are one of the easiest crops to grow. — **Carrie Burns**

