

crop culture report:

Petunia Mini-Me Series

This series presents a natural petunia with attributes similar to calibrachoa while maintaining all the benefits of growing petunias.

By Asaf Cohen



Top: 'Mini-Me Blue'. Middle: 'Mini-Me Pink Velvet'. Bottom: 'Mini-Me Red'. (Photos: Cohen Nurseries)

The Mini-Me series of petunias from Cohen Nursery of Israel is bred by Breier in Israel and is available exclusively through Cohen. The concept of the Mini-Me petunia series is to present a natural petunia that will give the same results of finished plants as the calibrachoa, while maintaining all the benefits of growing petunias. The varieties produce tiny flowers, and for some, these will be even smaller than those found with calibrachoa.

The varieties are produced under special quality certification standards controlled by the Israeli Plant Protection Authorities. All mother plants are built one to one from in-vitro material and are checked for more than 21 viruses. Production takes place in a Level A compartment at Cohen Nurseries, meaning the plants are grown in a separate, sterile greenhouse with a staff trained to work exclusively at this level.

Nine varieties will be introduced in the United States during the first season: Baby Pink, Blue, Dark Purple with Eye, Lilac Vein, Pink Star, Pink Velvet, Purple, Red and White. All varieties have very large amounts of flowers, appearing above the plant's foliage. Plants will be quite compact, measuring from about 4 to 8 inches high. Plants are half hanging with small foliage and flowers. The small size makes them more resistant to rainy conditions than other lines.

Propagation

Rooting is simple and should be quite fast, taking no more than three weeks. The initial rooting period is about 8-10 days. General rooting conditions ought to include maximum lighting, but air temperature should not exceed 86° F.

Ideal air temperature is 75-82° F. Media temperature should range from 71-75° F when plants are rooting. Humidity should remain between 90 and 95 percent. Use a standard, well-drained peat-based potting soil with medium fertilization.

Rooting and branching cuttings with buds is also possible. Because of the petite size of cuttings, it is possible to use trays with very small holes. The ideal number of plants per pot depends upon pot size and the age of the plants. There should be only one plant (5-7 weeks) in a 4- to 5-inch pot, 2-3 plants (7-9 weeks) in a 6-inch pot and 3-5 plants (8-10 weeks) in a basket.

Growing On

When growing, temperature should be kept at a minimum of 60° F at night and 68° F during the day for active growth. These varieties should have no problem with excessive watering and are not sensitive to EC or pH. Depending on plant size, EC level may be maintained between 0.5 and 1.0. The pH level should be kept between 6 and 6.5.

Media should be moist at all times but not too wet. Good irrigation until drainage appears is recommended. Afterwards, the medium should be allowed to dry without letting the plant shrivel. During every irrigation, it is recommended that 1-2 liters of 7:3:7 + microelements per 1,000 liters of water be added, depending on the size of the plant.

Except for Red, foliage will be quite small and narrow. The plants are well suited for small pots, containers, balconies and hanging baskets. Flowering time is similar to any normal, natural petunia, with blooms appearing quite early (aside from the Red, which will flower a bit later). Lighting levels can be full sun during cultivation.

Pinching and Finishing

Wait until rooting is complete before transplanting, which should be done directly into the final container. No more than one pinching is needed to encourage a good flowering and branching pot. Pinch the first time after rooting is completed. A second pinching can be conducted after the planting is established if desired. Growth regulators are not necessary.

While the series is not highly sensitive to pests and diseases, it is still recommended to watch out for a few potential dangers. Pests to watch for include caterpillars, red spiders, thrips, white flies and leaf minors. As for diseases, plants may suffer from Powdery Mildew, Pythium, Fusarium, Botrytis and Sclerotinia. Appropriate measures to protect plants should be taken if any sign of these appear. **[GPN]**

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