

crop culture report:

Petunia Littletonia Series

This versatile petunia hybrid will appeal to growers and consumers alike with its superior garden performance and improved disease resistance and heat tolerance.

By Reese Kiikka



From top: 'Littletonia Pink'; 'Littletonia Red Star'; 'Littletonia Sweet Pink'

Littletonia, a miniature-flower petunia hybrid, is a crop series for early spring sales and beyond. Expect a mounded profusion of continuous color all spring, summer and fall. Varieties are well established in the marketplace and universally known to growers for their garden performance, vigor, heat tolerance and improved disease resistance.

Variety Information

Plants in the Littletonia series are adorned with attractive miniature blossoms. The flowers, about 1½ inches in diameter, are a miniature funnel shape.

The series includes nine breeding innovations. Leading the list are four beautiful newcomers: Red Star, Breezy Pink, Sweet Pink and Red. Rounding out the remainder of the series are Rose, Pink, Purple, Violet and White, providing a variety of color-combination possibilities. Littletonias are just as effective in the landscape and any high-profile area where concentrated color is required. All varieties are now available from your preferred broker both as rooted and unrooted cuttings for the 2009 season.

Additionally, Littletonia has a semi-trailing habit, plus superior center branching that makes for endless possibilities in patio combinations, borders, landscape, hanging baskets, window boxes and pots of all sizes.

Another outstanding attribute is Littletonia's dense, self-branching growth habit, which creates tight, compact plants for excellent outdoor performance in rainy and windy conditions. Plants are self cleaning, easy to grow, sun loving and self maintaining, making Littletonia desirable to both commercial growers and homeowners.

Media and Fertilization

Use a sterile, well-drained soil with a pH range of 5.5-6.2. Let soil dry between irrigations. Too much water, lack of oxygen or poorly drained soils may cause foliar chlorosis similar to yellowing caused by iron deficiency.

Use a balanced feed of 150- to 200-ppm nitrogen

from a balanced fertilizer on a constant feed basis. Chlorotic foliage frequently results from iron, manganese and magnesium deficiencies, so ensure that the fertilizer you use contain these elements.

Temperature and Lighting

Littletonia is best grown in moderate temperatures. Maintain day temperature at 65-70° F and night temperature at 50-60° F.

Varieties in this series are day neutral. Provide long-day extensions to at least 13 hours, or as a four-hour night interruption before week 14 to promote flowering. Plants normally flower seven to eight weeks from the start of long days.

Plants are best grown under high light levels. Littletonia will benefit from supplemental lighting under low light conditions. Maintain light levels above 4,000 foot-candles during late-winter months to promote better flowering and more compact plants.

Pinching and Growth Regulation

No pinch is required. However, an optional pinch may be given after plants are well established.

As for plant growth regulators, petunias in time will grow quickly. They will fill containers and baskets in a short period of time. Additionally, low light levels and warmer temperatures can result in stretching. B-Nine (daminozide) can be effective to control stretching during these times, as well as for toning plants in finished pots for best shelf life. Plants can also respond well to paclobutrazol and uniconazole. It is suggested that all PGR rates be trialed before applications are made to the entire crop to ensure desired results.

Pests and Diseases

Scout for aphids, thrips and whitefly. Botrytis and Pythium can result from excessive moisture levels. Stressed roots causing yellowing can resemble nutrient deficiency. Maintain moderate soil moisture levels. Preventive root rot fungicides may be applied if desired.

In conclusion, Danziger Flower Farm is confident that Littletonia will be the right choice for growers looking to increase spring sales with a crop that is self cleaning, easy to grow, sun loving and self maintaining. Its instant product appeal, early spring sales and a few more dollars per square foot yield are all reasons to consider adding Littletonia to your mix. **GPN**

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Crop Planning from Rooted Cell

Pot Size	Cuttings Per Pot	Finish Time in Weeks
4-inch	1	4 to 6 weeks
6-inch	1	6 to 8 weeks
6-inch	3	4 to 6 weeks
8- to 10-inch	3 to 4	8 to 10 weeks