

# Gerbera Bengal Series

WITH OUTSTANDING FLOWER POWER, TIDY HABIT AND EXCELLENT VIGOR, THIS NEW SERIES WILL DELIVER HIGH-QUALITY PLANTS THAT WILL FLY OFF STORE BENCHES.

By Amy Briggs-Macha



*Bengal, the big brother to the popular Jaguar series, includes six core colors (Orange and White are pictured).*

The gerbera daisy continues to be one of the most recognizable and popular flowers in garden centers. Consumers love the wide variety of colors and the nostalgic daisy flower that works in an array of pot sizes and containers. With such high demand from retailers, growers are faced with the challenge of choosing the right gerbera series to match their production needs while delivering high-quality plants that will fly off store benches.

The new Bengal gerbera series offers growers a plant that is perfectly suited to 6-inch pot sizes and larger. Bengal is the big brother to Syngenta Flowers' top-selling Jaguar gerbera series. Bengal gerbera series provides a plant with excellent vigor to fill containers, but with a tidy and manageable habit that allows for production efficiencies from sowing through shipping. This new series includes six core colors: Orange, Orange with Eye, Rose with Eye, Red, White and Yellow with Eye. With outstanding flower power, growers can expect multiple flowers at first flush on short, strong stems that sit right above the plant canopy.

## Plug Culture

Bengal gerbera offers outstanding seed quality and vigor for growers who propagate. With a minimum germination rate of 90 percent, plug producers are ensured to have excellent uniformity and seedling vigor in the young plant stage of production.

Seeds should be sown in a larger cell plug tray, such as a 128- or 105-cell configuration, with one seed per cell. Seed is offered with a bright yellow coating to help the large seed pass smoothly through seed drums and allow easier visibility of seed placement in the plug trays. Light is required for germination, but a thin layer of vermiculite can be used to help maintain high humidity around the seed during radicle

emergence. Media temperatures at 74-76° F are necessary to ensure uniform and consistent germination.

During germination through the development of cotyledons, media moisture levels should be maintained at level 4 (wet) to a level 3 (moist). Once the first true leaves develop, media moisture levels must be reduced to avoid stunted, gnarled plants. Moisture levels should be alternated from a level 3 (moist) to a level 2 (medium) for the rest of the plug production cycle.

Application of calcium-nitrate fertilizers, such as 13-2-13 or 14-4-14, at 75- to 125-ppm nitrogen are recommended. Avoid fertilizers with high concentrations of phosphorus, as these formulations can also cause damage to newly formed leaves. Plug crop times are generally six to seven weeks with the development of five to six true leaves.

## Finished Culture

Plant Bengal gerberas in pot sizes ranging from 6 inches, gallons, hanging baskets and larger patio containers. For 6-inch and gallon pots, use one plant per pot and increase up to three plants per pot for larger containers. Planting depth is critical for gerbera. Make sure the crown of the plant is above the soil line to prevent flower delay!

Media moisture management remains critical throughout the finished production cycle to ensure high-quality plant material. Maintain irrigation cycles that alternate from a level 4 (wet) down to a level 2 (medium) to avoid stunting plant growth. If plants are slightly flagging at the end of the day, wait to irrigate the following morning as free moisture on leaves at night can cause stunted new growth.

Gerberas are fairly heavy feeders, so it is important to provide a well-balanced fertilizer at 150- to 200-ppm nitrogen during the finished production. Adding supplemental chelated iron, such as Sprint 138, and magnesium sulfate applications every three to four weeks during production will help maintain a healthy, shiny, green color to the plants.

Gerbera daisy is a facultative short day plant, meaning it will flower fastest at day lengths less than 12 hours. Most growers do not manipulate photoperiod when producing gerbera, but may extend day length in the late winter and early spring months to allow plants to bulk up slightly before flowering. During summer months, flowering will take approximately a week longer than in spring production and plants will have larger foliage.

Finished crop time for Bengal gerbera ranges from 10 to 12 weeks, on plug size, pot size and time of year. Specifically bred for a compact habit, Bengal can be grown with less square feet per pot compared to other varieties. With the very free flowering nature of this series, growers can expect three to five blooms to flush at one time, making for efficient bench run shipping. The short, thick flower stems will also help enable better efficiencies for rack shipping with the ability to have more layers per rack going out to the store. 

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