

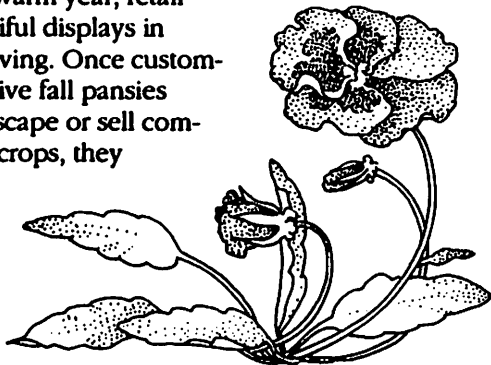
# Fall Pansies

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In Connecticut, fall pansies have received mixed reviews from growers. Some growers have had trouble marketing fall pansies, while others have had good luck in the marketplace. Growers with the most success marketing this crop developed their market gradually over a two- to three-year period. The first year, small numbers were planted and retail growers planted a display at their own site to bring attention to the use of the new product, while wholesale growers pushed small numbers of unsolicited pots along with fall mum orders. Some of these customers liked what they saw and ordered more. The second year, the number of pots produced increased and the customer response increased. After three years, these growers found a small (compared to garden mums) but steadily increasing market for fall pansies.

For these successful growers, the keys for developing this new product market were the gradual approach, the willingness to include (i.e. aggressively push) the product in orders even when pansies were not specifically requested or the on-site landscape use of the crop they were trying to sell. The real attractive feature with fall pansies is the extended season of bloom. In 1991, a warm year, retail growers had beautiful displays in bloom at Thanksgiving. Once customers see how attractive fall pansies appear in the landscape or sell compared to other fall crops, they were willing to give them a try.

The pansy crop is fairly quick. From seed, plugs can be ready for



transplant in four to eight weeks. Timing will depend on temperature and plug size. Seed sown in 800 plugs will finish in four to six weeks, 406 plugs can finish in five to seven weeks, and large 112 plugs take from seven to nine weeks. In Connecticut, growers are advised to buy finished plugs unless they have the special growing facilities required to maintain proper temperatures. Pansies are temperature sensitive, they don't do well in warm weather, so starting your own seed is not wise unless you can keep temperatures in the 60° to 75°F range.

From plug to finished product (i.e. a saleable pot), pansies take anywhere from four to eight weeks. Again, timing will depend on temperature, the size of the plug, the number of plugs used per pot and the size of the finished product. At 70°F night temperatures, a 1206 flat will finish in five to six weeks using 800 plugs. An 806 flat will finish in four to five weeks when 406 plugs are used and a four-inch pot will finish in about the same time if large plugs are used. For six-inch containers, use two to three large (112) plugs to keep the finishing time to a minimum (i.e. six weeks). If night temperatures average 55°F, add two weeks to the finishing time. Large plugs planted in four-inch pots in late August or early September will be ready to market in mid-October if night temperatures average 55°F.

In recent years, a large number of improved pansy cultivars have been introduced to the trade. For fall production and sale, ask your seed supplier for their recommended fall/spring cultivars. These cultivars were selected to show less of a response to day length. As the days get shorter in the fall, fall/spring cultivars flower more freely than do some of the cultivars originally selected for spring flowering (i.e. increasing day length conditions).

Pansies are susceptible to a couple of disease problems that growers should be aware of. *Thielaviopsis* or black root rot often becomes a problem when plants are under stress. This may occur following transplant, especially if plants are damaged in the process, or under high temperatures. High salt levels (EC over 1) or a high pH will aggravate the situation. Cleary's 3336 or Benlate can be used to control *Thielaviopsis*.

Under cool, wet conditions, *Pythium* can become a problem. *Pythium* is sometimes aggravated by high salts. Use Truban or Chipco 26019 to control *Pythium*.