FORCING FREESIAS

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Propagation and Flowering

CORMS: Plant corms September - early November for flowering late January through March. Grow at 70 to 75F until 6 to 7 leaves are visible; then lower the greenhouse temperature to 50 to 55F for floral initiation and development.

SEEDS: Seedings in May or June will flower in January to March the following year. Germination at 65F requires 3 to 4 weeks. Transplant when 2 to 3 true leaves are present. Grow at 70 to 75F until plants develop 7 visible leaves. Then lower the greenhouse temperature to 50 to 55F for floral initiation and development.

Other Cultural Guidelines

1. Freesias are not heavy feeders. 200 ppm N applied alternately as calcium nitrate and 20-20-20 every ten days has given good results.[2]
2. A preventative fungicidal drench may be needed as plants are susceptible to root and corm rots. Eight oz. each of Benlate and Lesan in 100 gallons of water has been used successfully.
3. Three layers of supports are recommended for plant support and to insure straight flower stems.
4. Plants will produce 30 to 40 flower stems per sq.ft. per year. Primary and lateral floral stems may be harvested separately.
5. To recycle corms: Let plants die down gradually. Dig and clean the corms. Dusting the corms with a fungicide will help prevent fungal corm rots. Store at 85F for 13 weeks. Many growers hang the corms in onion sacks in their boiler rooms over the summer. Separate corms and cormels. Both can be planted in the fall for subsequent flowering January to March. Storage at temperatures below 70F will promote pupation which results in the formation of a new, completely dormant corm on top of the existing corm. Maintaining adequately high temperatures during storage is therefore essential.
6. Harvest when one or more florets are open. Store in a cool environment.

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[2]*Assuming 15% "N" in calcium nitrate, 200 ppm "N" is 11.2 lbs/1000 gal. However, the source of N in* $Ca(NO_3)_2 \cdot 4H_2O$ *is nitrate* (NO_3^-) *and 200 ppm "N" is equivalent to 885 ppm* NO_3^- *or 14.3 milliequivalents per liter* NO_3^- *or 14.3 lbs. calcium nitrate per 1000 gal. water. We do not have an analysis for 20-20-20. How much "N" comes from* NO_3^- *versus ammonium* (NH_4^+) *is unknown. On the basis of 20% "N" in 20-20-20, a 200 ppm "N" solution is 8.4 lbs. per 1000 gal. water. What it is in milliequivalents per liter* (NO_3^- *or* NH_4^+) *is unknown. Which is the best way of expressing nutrient concentrations? (Editors Note.)*