

GROWING IVY GERANIUMS (*Pelargonium peltatum*)

R. W. Judd, Jr., Extension Agent, Horticulture

Ivy geraniums have made a tremendous comeback in the past few years. This is due to their popularity in hanging baskets. They flower freely from spring through autumn on long hanging or trailing stems. The leaves are ivy-like, glossy, 5-angled and sometimes reddish-zoned. The flower colors are white, red, pink or purple. They can be found growing in almost every greenhouse. However, there is a vast difference in quality from one greenhouse to another.

Ivy geraniums are fairly easy to grow if a few rules are followed.

PROPAGATION: Ivy geraniums are easily propagated from terminal and nodal cuttings. They can be rooted in specialized propagating blocks or practically any good propagating medium.

GROWING MEDIA: Use a well-drained soil mix. They do not grow well in a heavy soil and are difficult to keep watered in a peat-lite mix. Be certain to use sufficient limestone and super-phosphate.

FERTILIZATION: Ivy geraniums respond to high amounts of fertilizer. In the winter use 15-0-15 or potassium and calcium nitrate. Switch to 20-20-20 in the spring.

PROBLEMS: Ivy geraniums are subject to three problems: oedma, chlorotic foliage and mites.

OEDMA: The physiological disorder that causes the pimples or corky lesions on the underside of the

leaves. Severe oedma will cause the leaves to turn yellow and drop off. A recent publication suggested some guidelines to prevent oedma.

--The medium should be a porous, well-drained peat-lite type with 20%-30% mineral soil.

--Keep the nitrogen level high.

--Water in the morning so the plants can dry out.

--Grow in a well ventilated greenhouse.

--No saucers on hanging baskets.

--Keep away from the upper part of the greenhouse if it is hotter.

--Light intensity between 2,000-3,500 foot-candles.

--Do not mix with other crops on the same automatic watering line.

CHLOROTIC FOLIAGE: The new growth appears as very light green or almost white in color (Figure 1). This often occurs when plants are hung high

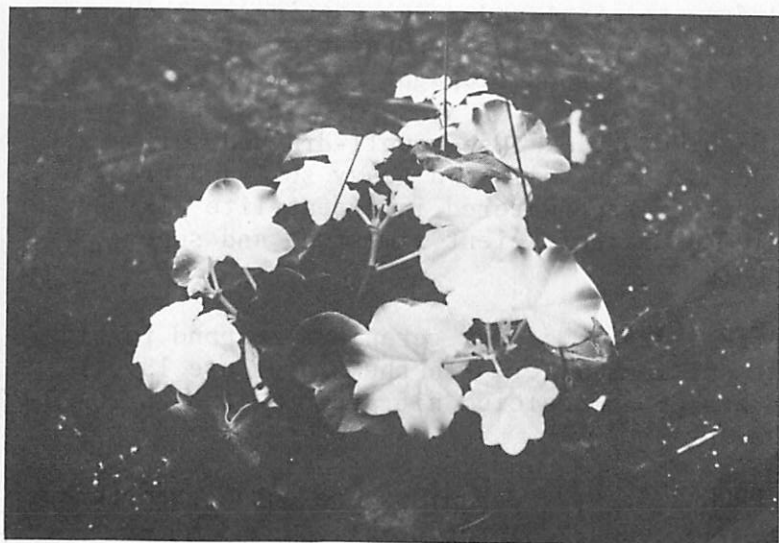


Figure 1. Chlorosis on ivy geranium caused by high temperature. This plant was hanging in the air stream from a unit heater.

in the greenhouse or in front of a unit heater. Apparently this is due to high light and/or warm temperatures. By placing the plants on a bench the leaves will turn green. A less dramatic chlorosis may be due to a lack of nitrogen.

MITES: Mites are extremely fond of ivy geraniums. They are often confused with oedma and vice versa. Sprays of kelthane and pentac will keep them under control.

Ivy geraniums are in big demand. Let's sell only the best.