

LANTANA

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The Lantana is regaining popularity with many growers because of the increased demand for hanging and patio pots. In fact its use as a hanging plant far exceeds its demand for other uses. This native of tropical and subtropical America, when grown properly, will produce a continuous mass of color during the summer months.

Flowers are produced in clusters on terminal twigs. The flat headed clusters contain many tubular flowers. Lantana flowers are available in colors of white, red, orange, yellow, lilac and multicolors. Check with propagating specialists for varieties and colors.

Most Lantanas in Connecticut are produced during the winter months. The stock plants have to be brought into the greenhouse in September as the plants are not frost tolerant. Cold damaged plants may resprout from the root system. Prune them back to obtain a compact plant that will produce many cuttings. Because they are tropical, it is necessary to provide a minimum temperature of 60° and preferably 65°. This will insure a constant supply of cuttings. This plant likes full sunlight but will grow in light shade.

Most soil mixtures can be used for Lantana. However, a good porous soil mix will produce the best growth. This will thrive in a moist soil, not one that is wet and soggy. They grow in a pH range of 5.5-7.0. Feed with a soluble fertilizer as needed.

Lantanas are usually propagated by cuttings. The softwood cuttings, 2-3 inches long, may be rooted

in any good propagation media or unit. Hormone powder is helpful, but bottom heat of 65° is necessary. Mist, while beneficial, is not necessary. The cuttings will root in 3-4 weeks. Soft pinch the plants about a week after potting. They should bloom in 6-8 weeks if 60° night temperature is maintained.

Standards: Lantanas lend themselves particularly well to training as standards. To grow a standard Lantana, a young plant is selected as soon as it is established in the pot. All side shoots are pinched off promptly when they appear but the main central stem is not pinched. As soon as possible, the plant is transferred to a 6-8" pot.

At this time a straight cane or stake is inserted in the soil and the plant is kept tied to this. When the single stem reaches the height at which the grower wants the head of the specimen to begin to form, its tip is pinched out to induce branching. Side branches that develop are pinched occasionally to encourage the development of a bushy head. Lantana standards live for many years and under good care increase in size and beauty annually.

Troubles: Low temperatures (below 60°F) or lack of fertilizer can cause chlorosis, leaf drop and necrotic spots on the leaves.

The two biggest problems in Connecticut greenhouses are white flies and spider mites.

Insecticides such as SBP-1382, Vapona or Malathion can be used for white fly control. Pentac or Kelthane will control spider mites. Contact your Extension agent.