

OSTEOSPERMUM

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The name *Osteospermum* L. represents a group of approximately 70 species of annuals, perennials and shrubs native chiefly to South Africa but extending into Arabia. *Osteospermum* are in the Compositae family. Plants are usually lower growing and/or sprawling in habit with smooth leaves and flower continuously with 'daisy-like' flowers that are usually white, yellow and recently pink. Flowers look like those of African daisies (*Dimorphotheca*, same genus). New cultivars can also have variegated foliage. Plants flower from seed the first year. *Osteospermum* are being promoted in the United States as pot annuals and/or hanging baskets, however, *O. ecklonis* and *O. barberiae* may overwinter where temperatures drop to between 14-23°F. In many areas of the U.S. these plants can be cultivated as a Gazania.

New *Osteospermum* are typically propagated from cuttings. Cuttings are rooted in Jify peat blocks under mist or in a humidity tent. Dip cuttings in a low concentration (Hormodin #1) rooting powder to encourage rooting. The temperature of the rooting media should be 72-75°F. *Osteospermum* are susceptible to root rot diseases during propagation. Therefore, after sticking, an application of a broad spectrum fungicide such as Daconil or Cleary's 3336 is recommended at the 1/2 rate.

Plant rooted cuttings in soilless medium 4-5 weeks after sticking cuttings. Grow plants for 2 weeks at warmer temperatures (63-68°F) to encourage rooting. After roots reach the edge of the pot, drop temperatures to 50-57°F. In other words, grow as a pansy crop. *Osteospermum* should be fed lightly i.e. 75-100 ppm N and K. Excessive feeding and/or using ammonium based fertilizers can cause excessive elongation.

Shading is not needed except to help keep plant temperature down. High plant temperatures can encourage excessive elongation by increasing DIF and reducing flowering. However, supplemental lighting (high pressure sodium) is reported to hasten flowering when light levels are low.

The most common problem in *Osteospermum* production is height control. DIF can be used to help limit elongation but must be supplemented with growth retardant applications. Apply Bonzi as a drench after roots have reached the edge of the pot at a rate of 2-4 ml/liter (8-16 ml/gallon). You can also apply Cycocel to *Osteospermum* as a drench through an ebb and flow system at a rate of 5-8 ml/liter (19-30 ml/gallon). If Cycocel is used and plants are drenched using a typical overhead drench technique, wash leaves off since Cycocel can cause leaf scorching in *Osteospermum*.

Osteospermum is relatively disease free, however, it is susceptible to Powdery Mildew, *Phytophthora* and *Verticillium*. As mentioned before, when rooting, *Osteospermum* may be susceptible to root rot diseases such as *Rhizoctonia* and *Pythium*. Therefore, fungicide drenches early in production are helpful. Powdery Mildew may be a problem in the landscape environment.

Fungus gnats, thrips and mites can infest *Osteospermum*. Apply pesticides as needed for control. Remember to rotate among pesticide families to limit resistance buildup in pests.

New *Osteospermum* varieties can be acquired via local sales reps or by contacting GASAAARHUS a.m.b.a., Havkoervej 83, DK-8381 Mundelstrup, Danmark, DK 1509 5873.



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