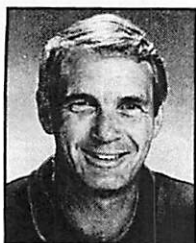


SPECIALTY ANNUALS

by Allan Armitage, University of Georgia, Athens, GA



Editor's Note: This is another installment of a ten part series that Armitage has prepared about new or little used annuals. He has coined these crops "Specialty Annuals." The series will run throughout 1998 but not necessarily consecutively.

Angelonia (*Angelonia angustifolia*)

Angelonia (an-gel-own' ee-a) Angelonia Scrophulariaceae
Pink/Blue/Purple/White/Bicolor Cent. and South America
2-3'3'

Introduction: I first saw this plant being used in landscape containers about 5 years ago by Kathy Pufahl, a grower/designer on Long Island. She had picked up some seed and produced a few plants at her nursery, Beds and Borders. I commented on its snapdragon-like appearance and commented how well it handled the summertime heat. The color she had planted was a handsome bi-colored form and it really looked good. I bet I showed that plant picture in dozens of lectures and seminars around the country. Mostly I received vacant stares. Today, however, what Kathy hath wrought on my conscience is appearing everywhere. Last year (spring, 97), it sprang on the retail scene in certain locations like a cheetah on the hunt and, as we speak, growers are bulking it up for next spring's production. This is a no-brainer. Find it, grow it.

I don't know of any accepted common name for Angelonia, but the botanical name rolls so sweetly off the tongue, we don't need one. I'm sure someone will insult our intelligence and make up a four or five letter common name, in the belief that anything with more than 6 letters can't be pronounced by the gardening public.

Plants are native to tropical and subtropical areas, where they are often cultivated as perennials or subshrubs. They are found wild in damp areas of the savannah and other open places. Although they naturalize in damp areas, they are quite drought-tolerance. There are about 30 species of angelonia, although most of the available cultivars are selections of *A. angustifolia* and *A. integerrima*. There are, however, no differences in the production or landscape protocol regardless of what you are growing.

What to know about this plant:

Basic Marketing Strategies (for salespeople)

Pros and Cons of Angelonia

Pros: An excellent performer in most of the country. A snapdragon-like plant which, unlike snapdragon, works in the summer. Provides the "spiky look" on bushy plants. Flowers continuously, available in four or five colors. No particular disease or insect problems I am aware of.

Cons: Requires some heat, at least more than petunias. Flowers appear profusely only when weather warms up. Not recommended for finishing in cell packs, more room required for 4", 6" or one gallon containers. Few cons.

Use In the Landscape and Garden:

The plant has not been grown long enough to have seen it in enough locations to get too fired up about, but I believe that what I have seen is pretty typical. They start a little slow but as they increase in girth, the flowers almost totally cover the plants. The inflorescences (flower stems) are made up of about a dozen individual 1" wide lipped flowers. Their heat tolerance is proving to be welcome throughout the country and their drought tolerance is also beginning to be appreciated. They grow 15" to three feet tall depending on cultivar and amount of heat. They require no staking. Plants are useful for landscape/garden beds as well as for containers. They are not particularly adaptable to baskets.

Basic Production Strategies (for growers):

Propagation: Vegetatively, from tip cuttings or from seed. Tip cuttings should have root hormone applied and placed in a well-drained rooting medium with 72-75°F bottom heat. Rooting in a 72-plug flat occurs in 7-10 days. One of the growers with whom I spoke commented on the fact that it rooted too easily. If seeds can be found, they should be sown in late winter early spring and only slightly covered. Germination occurs in 10-14 days at 75°F. In plugs, stage 1 = 75°F, stage 2 = 72°F, stage 3 and 4 = 70°F.

Growing-on: Provide as much sunlight as possible. Clean bays where plants are to be grown. Supplemental lighting will enhance branching. Plant growth will be delayed at temperatures below 60°F, but cool temperatures may be useful to slow down crop if necessary. Plants will be delayed but not damaged if temperatures are cool. Day temperatures of 70-75°F work well, night temperatures of 62-65°F are recommended.

Fertilize with 75-100 ppm N with a nitrate based complete fertilizer. Use at least 100-150 ppm P early in the crop. Reduce fertilizer concentration by one half as visible buds appear.

A single pinch enhances branching but is not necessary. However, the more branches, the more flower-bearing stems will appear. If growing in 4" container, one unpinched plant is sufficient, in 6" or greater, pinching or multiple plants will be effective. Finished plants will bud up in an additional 6-8 weeks, flowers occur about a week after visible bud.

Plants may require growth regulation (particularly pink), and the best time to apply is 10 days after transplanting to final container (1000 ppm Cycocel, 3500 ppm B-Nine, 1 ppm Bonzi). Cool temperatures will reduce the need for GRs but also slow down crop time.

Schedule: (guidelines only)

For April 15 sales (South):

<u>Dec 20</u>	<u>Jan 1</u>	<u>Feb 15</u>	<u>April 1</u>	<u>April 15</u>
Sow plugs	Germ	Transplant to final cont.	Visible buds	Sell in flower

For May 1 sales (North):

<u>Jan 30</u>	<u>Feb 15</u>	<u>Mar 20</u>	<u>May 1</u>	<u>May 15</u>
Sow plugs	Germ	Transplant to final cont.	Visible buds	Sell in flower

Cultivars:

'Blue Pacific' has been around the longest time and has long spikes of blue and white flowers. Problem with virus, particularly in cool temperatures. This is probably the same as 'Tiger Princess', a bi-color blue and white.

'Light Blue' bears the prettiest flowers in a light blue hue. Plants are bushy and more compact.

'Purple' is likely the species itself and has also graced our shores for some time. Purple flowers are held on vigorous, well-branched plants. This is also being sold as 'Hilo Princess.'

'Pink' is the poorest of the choices. The flowers are large but plants are lanky and produce more plant than flower. Probably a different species than the others.

'White' is not as vigorous as others but the white flowers are handsome and fit into the series of colors well. Color is a little unstable.

Availability:

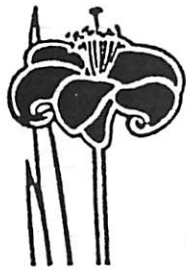
From seed and plant distributors.

Basic Retail Strategies

(for the final customer)

Plant in full sun. They need to be placed in well-drained soils for best performance, but otherwise are reasonably trouble free. We have not cut back spent flowers and plants have continued to flower. Place on 9-12" centers in the landscape, plants fill in 2-3 weeks after planting, depending on temperatures. They work in garden situations but also do wonderfully well in large patio containers.

They associate well with gray-leaved plants such as dusty miller, lamb's ears or silver plectranthus. The blue forms look outstanding with yellow marigolds or lantanas, the whites with almost anything. 'Blue Pacific' can pick up the blues and whites of bedding plants and ground covers around it.



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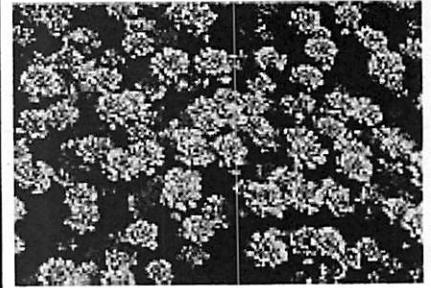
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