

## *Thunbergia battiscombei*

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Hort 4051, Potted Plant Production Class, University of Minnesota

In Hort 4051, students chose two species not previously grown as potted plants to research for potential use as flowering, potted crops. This is the first of many reports on new crops with developmental potential we will provide to you. Students role-played being hired as a New Crops Specialist for Floritech Company with their first assignment being a review of the literature, an estimate of the crop potential, and proposed production schedules for the first year. Students enrolled in Hort 4051 the next year will have the task of implementing the recommended production protocols to determine whether each species has a potential market. The summary report for each crop was in the form of a memorandum to the Floritech staff.

**To:** Grower Staff, Technical Staff, Sales Staff, The President

**From:** Heather Schuelke, New Crops Specialist

**Re:** New Crop Summary & Recommendations

After completing a thorough review of the published taxonomic, popular press, seed/vegetative catalogs, scientific & trade literature, and the internet, I have summarized the pertinent information for *Thunbergia battiscombei*. In addition, I have included my recommendations for the initial production trial.

### **Taxonomy.**

Scientific name: *Thunbergia battiscombei* Turrill

Common name: Stormy Sky Vine, Clock Vine (Hortcopia 1999; Morningstar 1999)

Family: Acanthaceae

### **Geographic Distribution.**

Continent: Africa; Country: Kenya (Blundell 1982); Regions: Mt. Elgon, Kitale & Kisii districts (Blundell 1982); Latitudinal Ranges: Kenya stretches from 5°N to 5°S, 35°E to 41°E; Altitude: 3500 - 7500 ft (Blundell 1982); General climatic conditions: Tropical: 82-93°F; R.H. 75-80% (Moomaw n.d.)

### **Native Habitat.**

Plant community: Savannah & grassland (Blundell 1982). Hardy in Z10-Z12 (Bailey 1976; Ross 1998).

### **Taxonomic Description.**

Erect shrub, rarely climbing except in semi-shade, 4-10' in height (Logee's 1999; Hortcopia 1999). Has a fibrous root system, 4" elliptical leaves, yellow-throated purple trumpet flowers (Bailey 1976; Ross 1998) in axillary racemes. Flowers continuously year-round regardless of photoperiod. Tolerates full sun indoors in winter months and part shade in the summer.

### **Cultivars on the Market.**

Logee's offers a vegetative selection under the species name. The black-eyed susan vine, *Thunbergia alata*, is a related vining species.

### **Propagation.**

Vegetative cuttings of young growth in summer: Stick cuttings in sand, sand & peat, or vermiculite in warm greenhouse until rooted using a mild rooting compound (Ross 1982; Botany, 1999).

### **Market Niche.**

Target sales dates: Spring. Potential holidays: Mother's Day & Easter. Could be grown as a specialty annual for container plantings; marginally frost hardy to frost tender.



### **Cultural Requirements.**

Temperature:

min. temp 60-62°F (Logee's, 1999).

Light:

full sun, 3000-3500 fc, possible 30% shade in summer (Dole and Wilkins, 1999)

Nutrition:

200 ppm N, constant liquid feed

Soil:

Well-drained medium

PGR's:

B-nine for height control if needed. Apply a 2,500 ppm foliar spray when the axillary shoots are 1.5-2" long or after pinching.

Container size:

plug trays (rooted cuttings), then transplant into 4" pots

Fungicides/Insecticides:

insect pests include spider mites, white flies and scale

Other:

stems may need limited support but this species does not have tendrils nor wind around stakes (Ross, 1998).

### **Production schedule.**

Estimated number of weeks from planting to flowering:

Cuttings (rooting)	3-4 wks
Pinch	3-4 wks
B-nine	2-3 wks
Growing on	<u>10 wks</u>
TOTAL	21 wks

### **Literature Cited.**

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