

**Cultural Details: Ageratum**

This low-growing Summer bedding plant is generally used for edging, and whilst dead flower heads can sometimes look a little untidy unless removed, particularly for the white and pale pink varieties, the flowering season is generally longer than Lobelia, and the habit of the newer F1 hybrids is very even.

Ageratum is straightforward to raise.

**Variety Selection**

Moles Seeds offer several broadly similar mid-blue varieties, as well as pale blue, dark blue, white and shell pink Hawaii. Bicolour flowers and a more substantial habit make the new variety Hellas ideal for containers. Blue Mink is a cheaper F2 variety, with a taller habit, less suitable for edging but an excellent free-flowering bedding item.

Finally at 75cm in height, Blue Horizon is equally suited as a taller bedding subject, and a cut flower for outdoor and protected cropping.

**Programming the Crop**

Sow February-March onwards for sales May-June.

**Propagation and Growing-on**

Sow onto the surface of a free-draining, open, seed sowing compost, which should be thoroughly wetted with a suitable fungicide prior to sowing (to prevent damping-off diseases), and the trays allowed to drain. Sow into plug trays to prevent root disturbance or into seed trays. Cover trays with clear or milky polythene to maintain humidity, until the first seedlings are visible. Pelleted seed is available for Ageratum, this allows easier sowing and placement of the seed – full details in the catalogue. Germination takes 7-10 days at 18-21°C. Keep the germinating seedlings moist at all times.

After around 5 weeks the young plants are ready for transfer 6- or 9-packs, or 8-9cm pots filled with a standard potting compost. Grow on at around 15°C until they are nicely established, then the temperature can be dropped to around 10°C. Liquid feed can be applied once roots are visible at the base of the pot or pack, or use a suitable slow release fertilizer incorporated in the compost. Growth regulators can be used to ensure a compact habit according to the manufacturers' instructions – contact your chemicals supplier for full details.

## **Cut flowers**

Plant out Blue Horizon young plants at 15cm x 15cm, support wire may be required as the crop reaches its full height of 75cm under protection. Cutting should begin around 6-8 weeks after planting.

## **Pest and Disease**

Maintain good air movement through the crop, and water in the morning rather than the evening to keep the foliage dry and lessen attack by Botrytis. Pay good attention to glasshouse hygiene, using only fresh trays, pots, compost, water and clean bench tops, and monitor for the presence of insect pests such as aphids, spraying accordingly.

*Information provided for guidance only, as cultural practices and climatic circumstances vary.*