

Cultural Details: **Ranunculus**

Producing big double flowers in a range of bright colours, Ranunculus Bloomingdale is popular for Spring sales, sold in pots in March and April, for use in outdoor containers and flower beds.

Careful attention to feed, temperature and growth regulator regimes is required to get the best from this crop.

Programming the Crop

Sow in August-early September to produce flowering plants the following March-April.

Propagation and Growing-on

Sow into plug trays to avoid root disturbance. Sow the seeds (1,500 per gram) onto the surface of an open seed-sowing compost, and cover with a very thin layer of vermiculite. Germinate as cool as possible, 10-15 °C is ideal, temperatures much above 18 °C will start to affect germination. Keep in a shady and cool location, and do not allow the germinating seedlings to dry out. Trays can be covered with clear or milky polythene.

Once the seedlings have emerged, begin a liquid feed programme and keep temperatures 15 °C maximum, night temperatures down to 5 °C.

Growth is slow initially. Around 2 months after sowing they will start to grow more quickly. When the seeds have 3-4 true leaves the plants can be potted into the final container, a 4-pack or 10cm pot.

Once the roots are visible at the base of the pot, commence liquid feeding, alternatively use a slow-release fertilizer incorporated into the compost. As the weather cools down, remove any shading, and keep good airflow through the crop to minimise disease. The crop requires natural short days to initiate flowers. Space the crop adequately to prevent crowding which leads to stretching and disease problems.

Subsequent growth rate depends on the temperature regime adopted. Once established in the pot, the plants can withstand temperatures down to freezing. Under these unheated conditions, plants will be compacter and not flower until April.

Alternatively heat can be provided, up to 10-15 °C. Under these conditions plants will flower earlier, and as light levels are low, they will have a tendency to stretch. Growth regulator sprays will then be required to counteract this, applied according to the manufacturers' instructions; contact your chemical supplier for full details.

Pest and Disease

Good air movement through the crop will minimise Botrytis and Mildew problems. Monitor the crop for the presence of Spider Mite (mottled patterns and webbing on the leaves), Aphids and Leaf Miners and treat accordingly.

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