



By Paul Pilon

Gaillardia x grandiflora 'Sunset Snappy'

WITH ITS ATTRACTIVE AND UNIQUE FLOWER COLOR AND LONG-LASTING BLOOMS, THIS PRODIGY WILL WIN THE APPROVAL OF GROWERS, LANDSCAPERS AND GARDENERS ALIKE.



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Gaillardia are one of the most recognizable and popular perennials in production today. With its flower power, this perennial staple can be produced for sales in the spring, summer or fall. Over the past decade or so, breeding efforts have significantly improved plant habit and flower color.

'Sunset Snappy' is the prodigy of all these efforts and is brought to the market as part of the Realflor Gaillardia Sunset Dwarf Collection. 'Sunset Snappy' has a unique flower coloration. The blooms have a purplish pink coloration with the edges of the flower petals having creamy yellow tips.

Besides the one-of-a-kind flowers, this cultivar has several characteristics that will win the approval of growers, landscapers and gardeners alike. The plants grow into compact 14-by-14-inch attractive mounds and develop numerous flowers with single rows of colorful petals in the late spring; the blooms are colorfast and long lasting.

As of now, 'Sunset Snappy' has shown good hardiness throughout USDA Hardiness Zones 5 to 9. Like other blanket flowers, this cultivar is heat and drought tolerant once they are established in the landscape. Additionally, they are resistant to deer and rabbits and are excellent at attracting pollinators and birds into the landscape. With its unique flower coloration and other desirables, 'Snappy Sunset' is ideal for use in containers, beds and borders.

Propagation

'Sunset Snappy' is vegetatively propagated by tip cuttings or tissue culture by a limited number

Gaillardia 'Sunset Snappy' is very easy to grow and can be produced for flowering throughout the growing season.

of licensed propagators. Plant patent protection has been applied for (PPAF) and propagation without as license from Plant Haven is strictly prohibited.

Gaillardia is relatively easy to root from unrooted cuttings (URCs). Licensed propagators root tip cuttings by sticking them directly into a pre-moistened, well-drained growing mix in liner trays with medium-sized cells. Place the trays under a moderate misting regime for the first few of days of propagation. Rooting hormones are not essential but do help to improve the uniformity of rooting; apply 500-ppm K-IBA spray within 24 hours of sticking.

After the cuttings are acclimated to the propagation environment, slightly reduce the amount of mist being provided for the next five to seven days. After the cuttings have begun to callus and develop roots, continue the gradual reduction of mist being provided each day.

Fertilizer applications of 100-ppm nitrogen can be applied once or twice per week beginning five to seven days after they have been stuck. With

soil temperatures being maintained at 68-74° F, they will usually be well rooted in two to three weeks. Liners take approximately five to seven weeks from sticking to become fully rooted and ready for transplanting.

Production

Gaillardia 'Sunset Snappy' is best suited for production in small 1-quart to 1-gallon containers. Blanket flower performs best when they are grown in a moist, well-drained growing mix. After potting, the original soil line of the liner should be even with the surface of the growing medium of the new container. For bulking, it is often helpful to pinch or remove any flowers or flower buds present during the first few weeks after potting.

They require moderate amounts of nutrients. Fertility can be delivered using water-soluble or controlled-release fertilizers. Gaillardia perform best when either 100 to 125 ppm is applied with every irrigation or using higher rates of 200 to 250 ppm as needed. Controlled-release fertilizers can be incorporated into the growing mix prior to planting at a rate equivalent to 1.0 to 1.2 pounds of elemental nitrogen per yard of growing mix. Controlled-release fertilizers can also be applied by topdressing at the medium rate listed on the product's label. The pH of the media should be maintained between 5.8 and 6.4.

Gaillardia does not tolerate real wet or overly dry conditions and should be grown under average irrigation. Extended periods of wet conditions can lead to crown and root rots. Additionally, excessive moisture leads to the development of weak stems.

As they mature, the plants will dry out more quickly and require more frequent irrigations. When watering is required, I recommend growers water gaillardia thoroughly and allow the substrate to dry slightly between irrigations.

'Snappy Sunset' has a naturally compact growth habit and will usually not require height management strategies. If toning is necessary, spray applications with the tank mixture of 2,500- to 3,750-ppm daminozide (B-Nine or Dazide) and 1,000-ppm chlormequat chloride (Cycocel or Citadel) are effective. For toning and shaping purposes, one application is often adequate.

Insects and Diseases

A few insects and diseases may be observed on gaillardia during production. The most common insect pests are aphids, caterpillars, spider mites, thrips and whiteflies; of these, aphids and thrips

occur the most frequently. There are several diseases growers are likely to observe from time to time; these include Entyloma (white smut), powdery mildew, bacterial leaf spots, Septoria leaf spots and root rots including Thielaviopsis, Phytophthora and Pythium.

In most cases, the presence of insects or diseases can be detected early with routing scouting. It is not usually necessary to implement control strategies unless your history with other gaillardia cultivars indicates a preventative approach is warranted.


Temperature and Scheduling

Gaillardia 'Sunset Snappy' is very easy to grow and can be produced for flowering throughout the growing season. It is not necessary to provide a cold treatment to produce flowering plants. Vernalization can be provided, but it is not necessary. This cultivar is considered a facultative long-day plant; therefore it will flower faster and more uniformly when grown under long days (>14 hours). Plants grown under short day lengths will still flower, but the flowering is delayed and the number of flowers produced is also reduced. When the day lengths are naturally short, long day conditions can be created by providing day extension or night interruption lighting.

As mentioned previously, it is often beneficial to remove the flower buds present with the first few weeks of production to help the plants fill out the containers they are being grown in. To further improve quality, grow them under high light intensities (>3,000 foot-candles).

When growing them under long day conditions, the amount of time to produce flowering plants is a function of temperature. 'Sunset Snappy' takes eight to 10 weeks to flower in 1-gallon containers when grown at 65-68° F. If the plants were pinched, after the onset of long days, it may take an additional two to three weeks for them to flower.

Availability

Gaillardia 'Sunset Snappy' was brought to the market by Plant Haven Inc. (www.planthaven.com). Unrooted cuttings are available from Florexplo/Dümmen Orange. Rooted liners can be obtained from several reputable perennial propagators. 

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