GrowerFacts

Ornamental Millet Jester

(*Pennisetum glaucum*)

Germination

Cover the seed with approximately 0.5 in. (1 cm) of media to prevent seedlings from tipping over. Light is not required for germination. Sowing 3 or more seeds in the center of the container is recommended. Total crop time can be reduced by 2 weeks by direct sowing into the final container.

Plug Production

NOTE: Plugs allowed to become rootbound or stressed by drought or nutrient deficiency will not perform well after transplant.

Media

Use a well-drained, disease-free, soilless medium with a pH of 5.5 to 6.3 and a medium initial nutrient charge (EC 0.75 mmhos/cm with a 1:2 extraction).

Sowing

Recommended tray size is 128 or larger cell. Larger cells result in shorter overall crop times. Multiple sowing 2 to 3 seeds per plug results in fuller, more attractive plants at retail.

Direct Sowing

Total crop time can be reduced by 2 weeks by direct sowing into the final container.
Sowing 3 or more seeds in the center of the container is recommended.

Using either method, cover the seed with approximately 0.5 in. (1 cm) of media to prevent seedlings from tipping over.

Temperature

Germination: 72 to 78°F (22 to 25°C)
Stage 2 to 3: 68 to 72°F (20 to 22°C)
Hold plugs: 62 to 65°F (16 to 18°C)
Seed germinates in 2 to 3 days at the recommended temperatures. Temperatures below 68°F (20°C) will significantly delay germination.

Light

Light is not required for germination.

Humidity

As long as the soil is kept evenly moist, high air humidity is not required for germination. Therefore, seed can be germinated directly on the bench.

Soil Moisture

Keep soil moisture high until radicle emergence, then reduce moisture levels after the radicle penetrates the medium. Do not allow the seedlings to wilt.

Fertilizer

At radicle emergence, apply 50 to 75 ppm N from 15-0-15. Increase to 100 to 150 ppm N as leaves develop.

Growth Regulators

See Growing On to Finish – Growth Regulators.

Growing On to Finish

Media

Use a well-drained, disease-free, soilless medium with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5 and a medium initial nutrient charge.

Temperature

Nights: 64 to 66°F (18 to 19°C)

Days: 68 to 85°F (20 to 30°C)
This is a warm-season crop. Higher temperatures result in faster growth and taller plants. Average temperature below 64°F (18°C) will significantly delay crop time; below 60°F (16°C) will stop plant growth.

Light

Keep light levels as high as possible. Higher light results in stronger and thicker stems and better basal branching. Young plants are green. The stem and mid-rib of the foliage first turn purple after about eight leaves have developed. The foliage coloration occurs when the plants are moved from the greenhouse outside to full sun. Note: Because the plants will be mostly green when sold, a color picture label is recommended to help consumers understand what the plant looks like after it is planted in the garden.

Irrigation

Maintain even moisture. Do not allow plants to wilt.

Fertilizer

Feed plants weekly with 150 to 200 ppm N in a complete fertilizer.

Growth Regulators

Plants Grown For Landscape Use

- Applying Bonzi at an early stage results in bushier plants with more side shoots without significantly affecting the final plant height.
- If seeds are sown directly into final containers, apply a 6 to 8 ppm Bonzi drench 4 weeks after sowing.
- If using plugs, a 3 to 5 ppm Bonzi drench can be applied one week after transplanting.

Optional PGR Treatment

Apply 2 applications of Florel 500 ppm spray. First application can be done 1 week after transplant or 4 weeks after sowing. Second application can be done 10 to 14 days later. Florel treatment can also result in bushier plants with more side shoots. However, Florel is not as strong as Bonzi in height control.

Plants Grown For Mixed Container Use

- If seeds are sown directly into final containers, 2 applications of a 6 to 9 ppm Bonzi drench can be used to control plant height. First application can be done 4 weeks after sowing. Repeat 10 days later.
- These treatments result in plants with the first flower spike approximately 2 to 2.5 ft. (60 to 75 cm) above the top of the container for Purple Majesty and 1.8 to 2 ft. (55 to 65 cm) for Purple Baron and Jester.
- Note: Based on the PanAmerican Seed research trial at Elburn, Illinois, transplanted plugs require less PGRs and make bushier plants after PGR applications, but crop timing is 1 to 2 weeks longer than direct-sown plants.
- Millet plant response to PGRs is variable with container size and different environmental conditions. We recommend that you run an in-house trial to determine the best rate or method for your conditions.
- If seeds are sown into plug trays, apply a 6 to 8 ppm Bonzi drench 1 week after transplanting into final container. Only one application is needed.

Pinching

Do not pinch.

Note: Do not allow the plants to be stunted from water stress, inadequate fertilizer or allow the plants to become rootbound. Plants which are stunted in a young stage may produce only a single, short stem and not reach their full potential.

Common Problems

Insects: Aphids

Diseases: No serious problems

Green Thumb Tips

- Plant in full sun for darkest purple color.
- Space plants 10 to 12 in. (25 to 30 cm) apart.
- Transplant into the garden before the plants become excessively rootbound. Rootbound plants will be shorter than non-rootbound plants.

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