

## It's almost summer

We had our first two hot weekends with over 90 F (and below 10% humidity, famous Santa Ana dessert winds or off-shore flow), and it felt like summer.

We planted our yard right after Pack Trials, and our plants had to go through those hot and dry weekends (in full sun) and had to survive 5 days without watering (we took a long weekend). My wife's favorites looked great, MiniFamous™ Calibrachoa, Bonfire™ and Bellfire™ Begonia, Glacier™ White Ivy Geranium, and

Marino™ Blue Heliotrope.

This issue will deliver the promised Begonia rooting trial results, technical information about how to finish Begonia, and in our Selecta News column we will introduce you to Carole, our new Sales Coordinator.

Sit back, relax, and enjoy the May issue of the Selecta News Flash.

Sincerely yours,  
Stefan Reiner



## Variety of the Month

**SuperTrouper™** Pot Carnation showed incredibly well during Pack Trials. The eight new varieties looked stunning and the plant habit was perfect. It is the best Pot Carnation series available and perfect for 4-5 inch pots, quarts, and even gallons. Order yours today!

## Totally Begonia - Part 2



Bonfire™



Bellfire™

The March News Flash was all about our Begonia rooting trials we were doing. We laid out the trials in detail and lined out some of the basic rules for a successful Begonia boliviensis propagation. Please refer to the March News Flash for those details. The May issue will wrap-up the results, and we will add the latest results of our research in terms of product development and placing.

The two images show very nicely the perfect use for those two very different Begonia boliviensis varieties. Bonfire™ is perfect for baskets of any kind, and it does very well in containers as long as it can mound freely. Bellfire™ grows upright and is vigorous and therefore perfect for larger containers and in the landscape. Both of them are great for consumers but need more attention from growers.

The simplest rule is to start them late when the weather is improving. Longer days, more light, and higher temperatures will benefit the crop greatly. Bellfire™ should be planted even later than Bonfire™ and is best used for late spring and summer sales. It won't branch in early spring due to lack of light and temperature as well as day length.

Bellfire™ roots easier compared to Bonfire™ but the same basic rules apply (as outlined in the March issue). Just keep in mind, the later you start, the better the results will be (this is especially true when finishing the crop!).



Above are a couple more examples how to use Bellfire™ and Bonfire™ best. But let's move on to the results from our rooting trials. Gerrit, our RC quality manager in Europe, rooted Begonia Bonfire™ and Bellfire™ using three different tray configurations and three different mist methods. He used a 104 tray full (25 mm), a 104 tray spaced to 52 (25 mm), and an 84 tray (35 mm). He rooted one set between Calibrachoa using their mist protocol, one set he covered with cheese cloth, and the third set he covered with cheese cloth+plastic. All other conditions were the same (light, temperature, day length, and so on).

The results surprised us, as all three mist methods and tray methods did work (some are slightly better but overall no bad results). This shows that if we apply the correct general conditions for Begonia boliviensis, then we can use different methods to root this crop.

According to his results, he preferred the 84 cell tray (35 mm paper pot) but said that the full 104 tray (25 mm paper pot) did work as well. The mist trials showed the lowest losses and fastest rooting under the cheese cloth+plastic combination (warmest climate overall), followed by the cheese cloth only and the regular mist (Calibrachoa require little mist - so he used a low mist protocol). Looking at the cuttings, however, he did like the cuttings rooted under mist (with the Calibrachoa) the best. Those were the most compact, most uniform, and already showed side shoots. The cheese cloth+plastic stretched and showed very few side shoots. After planting those plants in pots his first impression was confirmed. Best performed and branched were the cuttings rooted with mist followed by the cuttings rooted with cheese cloth only. However, he noticed that the cuttings under mist leached out slightly and looked more yellowish.

**We recommend** using paper pots either in the 104/25mm cell tray or the 84/35mm cell tray with no additional spacing between cells and trays. Use covered tables. In case you have wire mesh, cover them with plastic for a better micro-climate. Temperature in rooting needs to be high and at least 72 F (22 C) measured in the paper pot. Spray a fungicide in combination with a rooting hormone right after sticking and cover the cuttings well. Repeat the fungicide treatment after 4-5 days. Provide a minimum of 13 hrs of light (but you don't need more than 14 hrs!). Choose the mist method that works for you (either under mist or using cheese cloth). Use little to no mist and avoid overwetting the paper pots (even and especially before sticking!).



Bellfire™ with Cheese Cloth only



Bonfire™ with Cheese Cloth only



Bonfire™ under standard mist



Bonfire™ cheese cloth front / cheese cloth+plastic back

When using mist, apply very short mist run times just to moisten the foliage. Stress the cuttings as this will speed up rooting. Get them off the mist quickly and if possible don't mist during the night. Second option is to use cheese cloth and no mist (or only very little applied by hand if needed). Keep in mind that high turgor pressure will reduce branching (this explains also why the cheese cloth+plastic method didn't branch as well, and the same is true when applying too much mist). High turgor pressure (caused by over misting, for example) is also responsible for losses in the first days (cells burst and fungus enters quickly). Too low temperatures will increase losses, slow down rooting, and result in a very uneven result.

Avoid stretch and apply PGR. B-Nine will work according to Gerrit, but CCC (very low concentrations) can be used as well. If you keep the cuttings nice and compact (avoiding stretch) you will end up with more nodes and better branching at the end.

Images show the crop a week after sticking (03/18) and two weeks after sticking (03/25) = trials stuck on 03/11.

The image to the right shows Bonfire™ in a 25 mm Jiffy in a 105 standard tray (Jiffy also works well; however, it is important that the pots come out of the tray easily) on a plastic-covered wire mesh table. This was part of our rooting trial done by Gordon at Meadowlands in the Vancouver, B.C. area. You can see the fungicide cover on the foliage as well. This trial was without rooting hormone and part of our URC size trial. We will harvest a smaller cutting for next season, reducing foliage. The smaller cutting should travel better as well (less damaged foliage). It is important to avoid damaging the foliage during handling and sticking. If foliage is damaged, remove it prior to sticking.



Thanks, Gerrit and Gordon, for all your efforts and help!



Control with fungicide spray only.



Fungicide + Rooting Hormone spray.

**Finishing** Begonia Bonfire™ and Bellfire™ is not too difficult as long as we keep the basics in mind. They are Begonia boliviensis, a tuberous Begonia propagated via cuttings. They do need long days (> 14 hrs), high temperatures (like NGI for example) with temperatures never below 58 F / 14 C, and lots of light. The later you start, the easier your crop will be and the quicker it will finish. They need a well-drained media and should be kept on the dry side. They are good feeders and need about 150-200 PPM N of a well-balanced fertilizer; however, they don't like high salt levels (pH around 5.8 - 6.2). Good airflow around the plants is important. One pinch above node #4 is required. Bellfire™ you may have to pinch twice. PGR's like CCC and B-Nine work and may be needed for Bellfire™.

You can grow Bonfire™ in a 5-inch pot (1 plant) and a 12-inch basket (4 plants) in 7-9, weeks starting from a rooted cutting for a May finish week 18 = RC in week 12, URC in week 8 for Northern areas. In Southern areas you can use the same schedule for a week 15 finish (see top two images = perfect shipping stage. For larger plants as seen below you will need to add 2 weeks).

We planted trials the past two years starting with URC in week 5 (RC week 9, finish week 15) and week 1 (RC week 5, finish week 15 as well). The plants started in week 05 finished faster and in better quality. For many crops we would add more time to get better and larger plants; for this crop is it the opposite. Reduce crop time by starting later, giving them the climate they need.

Bellfire™ is even pickier, and we have not been able to finish a decent plant for week 15 (in the South). Finishing them for week 18 and later, however, was possible. Bellfire™ works great for late spring and summer sales and should not be planted too early. It just won't branch and grow straight up (or just sits there if pinched) until the conditions change to its favor.

Both are great products to go with crops like Angelonia, Scaevola, Nieremberbia, Zinnia -- all the crops that like it warm, bright, and need long days. The lowest image is the same basket as in the center just two weeks later (end of Pack Trials). It is a very fast crop once it has the right conditions to grow.

Use Bonfire™ for pots, quarts, baskets, containers, and anything giving it a chance to mound. When shipping, sell them in the stage of the top and center images (just showing color). For retailers the basket at the bottom will work fine. Use Bellfire™ for quarts, gallons, and large containers as a solitaire or combination plant. It is a great plant for landscaping as well. Bellfire™ is upright and vigorous and won't work in baskets.

You may want to have one or two large impressive plants on display and sell younger, easier to transport plants. It won't take long, and consumers will remember the name and buy it by the name (even if green). It is an amazing consumer plant performance wise and because it requires little attention from consumers = the perfect convenience plant. Both are great in full and part sun and take heat+humidity as well as heat alone. They need little water and are maintenance free. They will recover from drying out and survive even a week of vacation (tested in my yard).



## Get out there - summer is hiking time!



Yes, we are still hiking, and whenever possible you will find us somewhere on a trail. The first weekend in May we took our kids to Zion National Park in Utah. It was the first time that we went hiking with both of them. Sabina, my wife, carried Marcel our one-year-old boy, and I carried, as usual, Laura, our three-year-old girl. I tell you, she was much lighter last summer, and with my wife now carrying Marcel, we had to split the essentials between us, so the weight I had to carry increased significantly. It is possible, but I will need to step up my training if I want to carry her longer distances.

However, our new carrier (#2) is great and the best one I ever used. It is the new Deuter Kid Comfort 3 and comes close to the comfort of a new high tech backpack. Unfortunately it is my wife's carrier ;-)

I am in training for another big hike this July. This time I will take Angela (as last year) and the big boss, Nils Klemm (CEO Selecta Group), up into the deep back country of Yosemite National Park. We will hike the Benson Pass Loop starting out at the famous Glen Aulin trail head. It is a 56-mile-long loop hike with 13,500 feet of elevation gain. We spread the tour over five days. Permits are secured, and I can't wait. After last year's 4-day Rae Lakes Loop, I started a mission to reduce my gears weight, and I made good progress so far. Compared to last year I was able to cut 1.5 kg (little over 3 lbs) by buying newer and lighter gear. And I can cut another 2 kg by exchanging my tent with a tarp. Who needs a tent in the Sierras anyhow?

So stay put as I will report about the hike in the August News Flash (no secrets will be spared - its not Vegas guys ;-). By the way, Nils finished a couple of weeks ago a 50-km mountain marathon in the Pyrenees in under 10 hours!



### Selecta News

We are proud to introduce you to Carole Wharton Boyce, our new Sales Coordinator. She joined our team a couple weeks ago and is in the middle of our training program. She will be leading our customer service team, will be working closely with our two area sales managers, and support our broker customers. In the course of the next weeks Carole will take over a number of key accounts.

She and her team will be responsible to provide you with great customer service and sales support. They will take care of inquires of any kind and will assist you in problem solving. Please don't hesitate to call Carole and her customer service team any time. Together with Carole we will take Selecta customer service to the next level.



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