

# PLUG GERMINATION TIPS

- Make sure you buy seed, which is suitable for your sowing machine equipment improving sowing accuracy. Seed should be placed in the centre of each cell. If your sowing machine is not placing seed well the manufacturer may be able to offer a modification bar which can help.
- It is important to know the quality of the seed you are sowing. If you are single-seed sowing, seedling emergence percentage needs to be at least 85%. Below this level consider double-seed sowing if the product type will allow. Some products are not always suitable for double sowing e.g. for pot plant or cut flower production double sowing may not give a high quality product, price of seed may be too prohibitive, or seed which is a mixture of colours may produce two different colours of plants within a plug cell.
- If you are sowing colour mixes use 'Select' mixes. These contain colours which have been specially chosen for uniformity of germination and seedling size.
- If Ball Premier Line™ seed is available, it will produce a more even plug product. We use Ball Premier Line™ primed or treated seed wherever possible in our own plug production.
- Don't use old seed. If it has not been stored properly i.e. at a low temperature 5 – 10°C, and in unopened packets the seed quality will have deteriorated.
- To achieve a uniform product, you need even growing conditions. Especially important are the temperature and humidity conditions as seed germinates. A temperature-controlled germination area is essential to maintain the optimum temperature for the particular variety. Seed also requires 100% humidity for the first few days. Check the germinator at least twice a day and remove young germinated seedlings into the lighter conditions of a growing area before they stretch.
- Compost should be evenly wetted before sowing and benches must be as level as possible. Much variation in young plugs is caused because watering across plug cells becomes uneven when plug trays are not flat.
- Check everything! Don't just rely on what automated equipment is telling you e.g. have a max/min thermometer in the germination area to visually check thermostats are working as you expect. Check them every morning, record any variations from what you expect so you can link it back to the crop if there are any problems later.
- Use high quality low nutrient level compost. Make sure you record batch numbers of compost when it is delivered, and which batch is used for which sowings. Again, if variations in the plugs occur later you can trace back to the batch used.

Ball Colegrave cultural information is issued as a guide to growers, based on our own trials experience. It is not intended as a blueprint for growing. Any chemicals referred to should be used only in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.