



Virginia Green Industry Council

For Immediate Use

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Electronic Version:

www.viriniagreen.org

Pinch Your Petunias

As you sit on your patio during these hot, humid summer afternoons, are you looking at a bed of petunias 16 inches tall with a few flowers perched atop “leggy” almost leafless stems? What happened to that beautiful, compact leafy plant you bought last spring?

The petunia is one of the most popular bedding plants, according to Len Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council. Most gardeners buy their petunias in early spring, plant them and enjoy a flowering garden until mid-summer when the plants become very leggy, fall over, and remain an unattractive spectacle until frost. “A few simple tips can turn your garden into a flowering delight all summer,” Diacont said.

Petunias’ growth habit responds according to the temperature and the amount of daylight. At 62 degrees, the plant will be branched, bushy, compact and multi-flowered. From 62 to 75 degrees, the growth habit will vary depending on daylight. Days with less than 12 hours of daylight will produce single-stemmed plants with only one flower. Above 75 degrees, the plant will always be tall and leggy with a single flower. This is why hot weather takes its toll on petunias. But now is the perfect time to pinch them!

To combat the effect long, hot, humid days will have on petunias, plant before the temperatures get warm and pinch off all the flowers so that new growth efforts will be directed into branching and vegetative growth. Planting before the temperatures get warm, encourages natural branching and gets the plant off to a healthy start.

Even if the plants were not pinched at planting, by the second week of July, they are ready to be pinched. Snip each stem about three to four inches above ground level. In about two weeks, the plants will have a much fuller, more beautiful display. This is also a good time to weed the beds, fertilize, and clean up dead or dying leaves.

The third pinch should be made late in the season, around the middle to the end of September, if a heavy frost has not yet occurred. Petunias like cooler temperatures and you can have a massive bed of flowers until the first killing frost. Pinching forces the plant to branch, and when it re-flowers, each branch will produce a bud.

Petunia do not like water on their flowers. After a rain, petunias close up and appear wilted. When you water, use a watering wand or soaker hose so plants are watered well at ground level. Once water has touched the flower, it will take several days before it is fully open again.

Proper pinching and watering are green thumb tips to successful petunia beds. Those gardeners willing to spend a little time reap the beauty of massive flowering beds all season long.

More gardening information is available at www.VirginiaGardening.com

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state’s environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state’s economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

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