

Caribbean Jewels™

'Sapphire Blue'



Discover the Treasure!

LOW INPUT
COOL CROP

Cultural Guidelines
03/2008

GOLDEN STATE
BULB GROWERS

Golden State Bulb Growers' *Caribbean Jewels™ 'Sapphire Blue'* is unique for its striking blue color and its interesting large conical flower form plus it's impressively long post harvest display. Considering the exorbitant costs of energy, growers should be informed of this new & low-input crop. In general, crop culture for *Caribbean Jewels™* is quite simple and requires very little fussing when provided suitable environmental conditions. Even though *'Sapphire Blue'* is the only cultivar available at this time, stay tuned for exciting new releases that will soon broaden the *Caribbean Jewels™* color range. Golden State Bulb Growers invites you to introduce your clients to the intoxicating experience found in *Caribbean Jewels™*.

Planting and Scheduling:

Caribbean Jewels™ are botanically classified as a *Scilla peruviana* or sometimes *S. caerulea* and should be planted during the fall from September to December, with September and October the best time period. Blooms come primarily in February through March, and may extend to early April. Later plantings will produce less foliage and vigor, but tend to bloom concurrently, or within 2-3 weeks of earlier plantings. Planting depth should allow for 0.5-1" (1.2-2.5 cm) of media over the nose of the bulbs.

Bulb and Pot size:

Three bulb sizes are listed for sales: Medium- 1 ½-1 ¾" (12/14 cm); Large- 1 ¾-2 ¼" (14/18 cm); and Jumbo- 2 ¼"+ (18 cm up). The Medium sizes usually are single nose (one predominant top sprout) producing less foliage, but can sometimes produce multiple blooms of 2 to 4 flowers, too. Pot sizes of 4 ½" to 5" (11 to 13 cm) are ideal for these grades. Large bulbs are well suited to gallons and often produce multiple noses & flowers. Finally, Jumbo sizes produce multiple noses or breaks—with full, vigorous foliage and multiple blooms upwards from 4 to 12 flowers—ideal for 6" (15 cm) pots.

Media and Fertility:

A well-drained media and neutral pH are recommended. Fertility requirements are minimal and only a light balanced feed to enhance foliage is necessary. Too much fertility produces overly full and loose foliage and blooms.

Watering:

With a well-drained media, **keep moist but not overly wet.** Do not let media dry excessively, especially during flower production and near to shipping. On excessively warm or dry spring afternoons, some foliage may droop or "flag", but plants always recover nicely. Aim to pack plants during cool morning hours.

Temperatures and Light:

Caribbean Jewels™ prefer bright & quite cool conditions indoors, or uncovered & cool outdoors; this is the key to great performance. *Caribbean Jewels™* are surprisingly cold hardy, handling temperatures down to light frosts of 28-32°F (-2-0°C) without plant damage. In cool Mediterranean climates, such as the West Coast in the United States, *Caribbean Jewels™* actually prefer to be grown outdoors, uncovered. In fact, *heated greenhouse culture often loosens and stretches plants inordinately. Bright cold frames with minimal freeze protection often work well.*

Optimal temperatures are Day: 50 to 70°F (10-21°C) and Night: 35-50°F (16-10°C). Some fluctuation in temperature peaks can be tolerated, especially prior to flower budding. Warmer temperatures, again, will loosen, stretch and soften plants, especially after bud set to shipping. **Stay cool and bright, and you will have a marvelous and exotic new product.**

Pest & Pathology:

Disease incidence tends to be minimal and unless specific root or foliage problems are observed, no drenching or spraying is required. However, in some instances, growers have faced secondary and sometimes severe infections of *Pseudomonas*, *Helminthosporium* and/or *Dreschlera* leaf spot. Be prepared to scout, treat and spray accordingly.

Overly humid conditions without good air movement, especially in warm periods, may result in foliar pathogen development. Keep air well circulated and use a Kocide type copper spray at label rates if needed. Aim to irrigate early and avoid "wetting" foliage.

Scout for mealybugs, as they can sometimes be a problem. If found, drench with a systemic such as Marathon or Orthene.

Growth Regulation:

Recent studies, as well as market feedback, have indicated that although proper cultural techniques can yield a compact and well-proportioned pot of *Caribbean Jewels™*, growth regulation is desirable for optimal interior postharvest performance and consumer satisfaction. Crops intended for use as premium potted plants for interior display greatly benefit from a Bonzi drench. (Note: *Caribbean Jewels™* grown outdoors [and cool as mentioned above], and aimed at the garden center market will likely not require the use of growth regulators. Please review conditions where product will be merchandized.)

Applying a late, and relatively high dose of Bonzi when buds are almond to walnut-sized and still buried deep within the leaf rosette will dramatically reduce the postharvest stretch that occurs when this crop is displayed indoors (generally dark and warm). *Studies have shown that when Bonzi is not used, the flowers of this crop tend to stretch dramatically and often topple over within 3-5 days of interior display. This type of reaction to low natural light can be eliminated by a single application of Bonzi: using drench rates from 7.5-30 ppm, with 15-30 ppm being more effective.*

Drench 4.0 oz/4.5" pot **OR** 6.0 oz/6.0" pot (118 mls/11 cm or 177 mls/15 cm). Best results are achieved by drenching when the flowers are without colored florets and without neck development (no stem visible below the flower bud) and are "almond-walnut sized".

When PGR's are properly administered, consumer post harvest performance for *Caribbean Jewels™* can exceed 14 + days.

As always, growers should examine rate and timing trials to determine the best method for their particular needs, prior to commercial scale application