

## **THE CULTIVATION OF FREESIAS IN HOT CLIMATES**

Herewith we give you some instructions which will help you to make your freesia cultivation a success.

### BEFORE PLANTING

The soil in which you want to plant the freesias should meet the following requirements:

- Good structure, no clods.
- Good drainage.
- Free of diseases, otherwise steam or disinfect the soil.
- A pH level of preferably not lower than 6.
- Low salt level, if you think it is too high then give the soil plenty of water two weeks before planting, so the salt can rinse out.
- Crop rotation!
- Try to keep the soil temperature as low as possible by using double shade canvas and keep the soil moist, starting two weeks before planting!
- In case of higher soil temperatures (higher than 20°C) the soil should be covered with sawdust or straw, this to prevent silting up.

To lower the soil temperature you can use soilcooling: use 4 tubuleen tubes and put these 10cm deep in 1 meter bed. Through these tubes circulate cold water, around 10°C (ground water or water from the mountains). Start to circulate the water one week before planting. (This can also be used for 5°C Tulips).

When using a plastic or shade house, make sure that there is enough air circulation by opening the top and by opening both sides of the plastic or shade house.

### PLANTING

- Plant the bulbs in slightly moist soil.
- You can use flowernets before planting, which is easier with planting and will also support the flowers later.
- Never plant at the hottest time of day.
- Plant the bulbs 8cm deep in the soil.
- Plant around 100 bulbs/m<sup>2</sup>, depending on the size of the bulb and the variety.

- When using soilcooling, plant the bulbs on both sides of the tubes, each bulb at the same distance from the tube, so you can obtain a regular grow.

#### AFTER PLANTING

- In the first week after planting during sunny weather, spray with water a few times for one minute to maintain a moist upper soil, but do not make it too wet otherwise you will have soft bulbs.
- A soil temperature of 18°C for the first three weeks after planting is no problem.
- From week 4 to 7 try to keep the soil temperature at 16°C. A soil temperature higher than 18°C delays the initiation of the bud and will only produce leaves.
- As you can see in the table below each different air temperature gives different results of the plant.

Table: Details of the growth of a freesia variety at different constant temperatures. The bulbs were planted half November.

<b>Greenhouse temp. in °C.</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>
Number of days until flowering	114	103	97	122	148
Height of plants in cm	52	66	73	91	90
Number of leaves	8	10	11	12	15
Number of flowers on main spike	9	10	11	13	14
Stem length in cm	47	67	70	77	61

- Water should only be given between the plants, the plants must be dry by evening.
- When the plants are about 5 cm high, lower the shading by taking one shade canvas away, do this when there is not much sunshine, the side shoots will develop better then.
- Take care that there is enough ventilation between the plants.
- Greenfly is a big carrier of viruses. Spray with chemicals against it, preferable with a chemical against trips.
- When the plants are getting too long and the leaves go down, cut the leaves by hand about 10 – 15 cm.
- Harvest the freesias just before the first flower will open and put them as soon as possible in clean water.

Please note that this is just an indication on how to grow freesias. Different circumstances ask for a different approach.

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