

PETUNIA

PETUNIA COCONUT ICE

Double Petunia Coconut Ice

A dreamy double petunia with very large flowers of soft orchid pink, that mature to a lighter more delicate shade. Some flowers have white splashes. Excellent compact growth habit from the Double Cascade series. Flowers 10-13cm across will develop 6-8 weeks after planting.

PETUNIA BRITANNIA™

Petunia Britannia

Celebrate Australia's future with a salute to the past. No matter what your view of an Australian republic, Britannia gives a bold show in red, white and blue. Look carefully for the crosses of St George and St David. Britannia comes from the best breeding, of course ensuring large flowers and compact plants.

PETUNIA CORAL SANDS™

Petunia Coral Sands

What better colours to provide a tropical feel than coral and watermelon with sandy highlights? Coral Sands is a beautifully balanced grandiflora Petunia blend. Large flowers on compact plants that are ideal for containers, baskets and planting in beds... around palms.

PETUNIA DEVONSHIRE TEA™

Petunia Devonshire Tea

An opulent new mix of large, double, ball shaped flowers on compact plants. Devonshire Tea™ as the name implies, is a delicious blend of berries and cream. Devonshire Tea™ is an improved variety with enormous double, ruffled flowers on compact even sized plants. Devonshire Tea™ is vigorous and hardy, and should thrive in sunny, exposed positions which makes them great for mass planting, borders, hanging baskets and window boxes. Whether used casually or with classic formality, Devonshire Tea™ Petunia's opulent, double flowers will definitely be a talking point.

PETUNIA BLUE HARMONY

Petunia Blue Harmony

All the great gardens of the world use water for texture, reflection and coolness. Petunia Blue Harmony's cool blue shades blended with hints of mauve and pink help produce the same cooling effect in your summer garden. Excellent plant breeding ensures compact even growth with very large flowers.



SCOTSBURN NURSERIES

I'm a lonely little Petunia

Name: Petunia X hybrida

Family: Solanaceae

Relatives: Potato, Tobacco and Tomato

The name Petunia is derived from the Argentinean Indian name for the flower 'Petun'. About 30 wild Petunia species grow in the hot dry areas of South America and the warmer regions of North America. Now don't go to sleep yet because this bit is rather interesting. The parents of the modern Petunia were collected during the great age of discovery around the 1820's, that's less than 50 years after the first fleet arrived in Australia. Not only that but Argentina was going through civil wars following declaring its own independence from Spain, so you have to imagine that it was a pretty wild place. In 1825 Mr. John Tweedie, aged 50 packs in his safe and respectable gardening job and takes his wife and six children to Argentina to search for plants. As it turns out he was very good at this and is remembered for Pampas Grass, Verbena and Petunia violacea.

While we may not thank him particularly for Pampas Grass, Mr. Tweedie's other collections have had dramatic effects of garden design. Verbena revolutionized English gardening in the 1850's, less than 30 years after its discovery in the wilds surrounding the River Plate. After many years dominating English gardening the grand, natural landscapes of Capability Brown suddenly went out of fashion and were replaced with vibrant, colourful 'bedding' displays based largely on Verbena and other annuals.

The modern Petunia is a result of cross breeding two Argentinean. *P. nyctaginiflora* has an "upright habit, thick stick leaves and long-tubed, fragrant white flowers". Sounds familiar doesn't it? *P. nyctaginiflora* is the dominant parent variety. Mr Tweedie's *P. violacea* with smaller violet (remarkably enough) flowers and a 'decumbent' habit is the source of the great variety of colours now available in Petunias and the compact branching growth habit that we like.

The original Petunias caused a great stir in Europe and cross breeding followed soon afterwards. All the new plants arriving from the Americas, Asia and Australia were immediately grabbed by enthusiastic amateur geneticists and selected and crossed with all sorts of related and unrelated plants. This craze for plant breeding was perhaps at its height through the mid 1800's and was all going on before (and helped lead to) Mendel actually discovered the basic concepts of genetics later in the century. Early Petunia breeding included crosses with Tobacco (failure) and *Salpiglossis* (complete failure) and selections for large flowers, scented flowers, double flowers and new colours. The first double Petunias had already been produced in Europe in the 1850's.

Petunia breeding continued and popularity increased as the colour range, flower size and consistency of the plants gradually improved. Seed catalogues and garden magazines from the late 1940s and the early 1950s advertise the Petunias: Rosy Morn, Rosy O Day, and Rose of Heaven. Significantly all rose pink in colour.

Gardener's want colour!

The big breeding break through was: "The new American variety 'Comanche', blooms are fiery scarlet, a colour which does not fade". Limited colour range? Colours that fade? Today's Petunias come in an overwhelming array of colours, textures, and shapes. Reds and pinks through to rich velvety blues and branching off to white, burgundy, salmon and veined varieties. Yellow is still not well represented in the spectrum, but recent improvements to varieties such as Carpet Buttercream indicate that a broader range of yellows and orange might be just around the corner.

Modern Petunias are classified into three main groups and you can see how the blending and selecting of the original genetic material has produced each of the types. Grandiflora, with large showy flowers; Multiflora with numerous medium sized flowers and Milliflora, true miniatures, with dwarf growth habit and masses of 20c coin sized flowers. Plant breeders have returned to the original species plants more recently and crossed with a wild rambling type to produce the spreading or 'Carpet' Petunias. There are also double and semi double varieties available in both grandiflora and multiflora classes.

With such a great range of colours to choose from, most of the seedling producing nurseries now select their own colour mixes or blends from the seed companies. In fact this idea originated in Australia, and nurseries around the world are following the trend. Petunia blends are used to create themes, styles and moods.

Petunias are synonymous with Summer and considering their Argentinean origins they are not surprisingly very water wise. Take care when planting Petunia seedlings into garden beds or containers as they have a magnetic attraction for snails and slugs. And remember when planting Petunias in August and September, strong cold winds are more of a threat to young Petunia seedlings than late frosts. Be warned and take precautions. They thrive in hot, dry and sunny conditions. Once your seedlings are established however, there is little to hold them back. Sit back and enjoy the magic of the humble Petunia.

• GREAT SCOT HYBRID SEEDLINGS •

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