

CALLIOPSIS OR PLAINS COREOPSIS

Coreopsis tinctoria Nutt.

Description: An annual forb which usually germinates in late summer or fall and overwinters as a rosette (round, low growing group of leaves). The stems begin growing upward and branching in April, reaching a height of up to 4 feet. The opposite leaves are deeply divided, with the upper leaf segments being very narrow. The flowering heads are numerous, 1-2 inches in diameter, and are yellow with a red-brown center. They begin opening in May and continue flowering through July.

Uses: This plant is used mainly for landscape beautification. It has potential for use in cultivated, garden situations, in naturalized prairie or meadow plantings, and along roadsides. Calliopsis was introduced into Mississippi from the Western states, but it is not aggressive and should not become a problem weed.

Site adaptation: Calliopsis is adapted to many soil types. It grows best on a well-drained soil, but will not tolerate a very dry site. Natural stands are generally found on bottomland areas with ample moisture. It grows best in full sun, but will tolerate light shade.

Cultural Specifications

Method of establishment: Seed

Planting time: August to September

Seedbed preparation: A firm seedbed is required. Calliopsis germinates best on a clean tilled site that has been firmed with a roller or finishing harrow before planting. Seed can also be planted into a closely mowed, chemically-killed, or burned sod area with a light disking or harrowing that scratches the soil surface. A layer of plant residue on the soil surface can interfere with seed germination.

Planting rate and method: 1-2 grams per 100 square feet (1-2 lb/acre) broadcast or shallowly drilled. Seed should be placed close to the soil surface. Cultipacking after planting will ensure good seed to soil contact. Seed will germinate soon after planting and remain as a rosette throughout the winter.

Fertilizer requirement: Plant growth and seed production are greatly improved by fertilization. Apply according to soil test recommendations. If not available, a rate of 3.5-5.5 oz per 100 square feet (100-150 lb/acre) of 13-13-13 should be applied in the spring before flowering.

Companion plants: Calliopsis is well suited for growing with a wide variety of wildflowers and grasses and is recommended for roadbank seed planting mixtures in Mississippi. Some suggested companion wildflowers are clasping coneflower, black-eyed susan, ox-eye daisy, four-o'clocks, scarlet sage, cosmos, and purple coneflower.

Management

Disking: Stands will reseed prolifically for several years, but will gradually decline without soil disturbance. Every two to three years, the site should be disked to control perennial weeds and promote calliopsis germination. August is the best month to perform this operation.

Mowing: If necessary, plants can be mowed in the spring before stem elongation begins in April. Stands that are not disked should be mowed in August, and a fall mowing in early November is also recommended.

Seed production: Seed matures fairly quickly after the flowers fade. Mature seed is crescent-shaped, dark brown to black in color and will be surrounded by reddish bracts that eventually spread to release the seed. Seed can be harvested by hand or with a conventional combine. Combines can easily thrash the seed from the surrounding bracts before seed would be released naturally, therefore, an earlier harvest date is recommended to prevent seed losses.

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