

# Plant Culture

# Tips For Growing Otomeria O'Premiera

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When it comes to standing up to summer's worst, nothing's better than the Otomeria O'Premiera series. This hot plant choice — native to East Africa — doesn't just survive but thrives in the most intense sun and the hottest heat that nature can provide.

O'Premiera, the only commercially produced Otomeria series, includes four colors: Baby Pink, Pink, Ruby and

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White. All are hardy to Zone 11.

Growing 14 to 18 inches tall and 12 to 14 inches wide, they are ideal for containers and landscape plantings alike. With an upright, well-branched habit, these sun lovers stay a pleasing, compact size. O'Premiera varieties flower continuously in warm weather and high light, typically through summer.

### General Culture

For a 5-inch (12 cm) pot, use one plant per pot. Plants will be ready for sales (from rooted cutting) within six to eight weeks. For 6-inch (15 cm) pots, use one to two plants per pot, and they'll be ready in seven to nine weeks. For 10-inch (25 cm) pots, use three to four plants, and expect sale-ready plants in nine to 11 weeks. Optimum growth conditions include day temperatures of 68°F to 88°F and night temperatures of 68°F to 74°F. To root cuttings, keep temperatures at 72°F to 75°F. Expect rooting in 14 to 18 days.

Plants excel at temperatures of 86°F and above, but growth ceases around 59°F and injury starts to appear under 50°F.

### Irrigation And Fertilization

Watering varieties in the O'Premiera series requires a careful balance, as they're susceptible to root rot. This is a particular concern when roots are less active in low-temperature conditions. Keep plants evenly moist but avoid overwatering.

Use a balanced fertilizer in a constant feed of 150 to 200 parts per million of nitrogen. Choose a product with a slight increase of iron and average levels of micronutrients.

### Light And Media

For the most floriferous, compact plants, provide maximum light intensity; full sunlight is best. Another possibility is up to 40 percent shading, although that may add the need for plant growth regulators and a second pinch. Flowering is compromised and plants stretch with heavier shade levels.

O'Premiera prefers a potting mix that drains well and is



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disease-free. The electrical conductivity (EC) level should be kept within a range of 0.6 to 0.9, with pH levels maintained at approximately 5.5 to 6.5.

### Controlling Plant Growth

O'Premiera performs best with one pinch, at the height of two pairs of leaves. Pinch in trays, with targeted timing approximately seven days before planting, or about a week after liner planting and establishing.

With high light, growth regulators won't be necessary. At your discretion, one to three sprays of daminozide or alar (B-Nine, for example) may be applied according to required plant size at 2 grams per liter.

### Pest Control

Maintain a vigilant scouting and monitoring program to prevent any insect and disease activity.

Watch for and take steps to prevent Botrytis when rooting cuttings in high humidity conditions. GG

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