



CALIBRACHOA
Calibrachoa hybrids

6 to 10 in. tall,
18 to 24 in. wide

Flowers in shades of blue, violet,
white, yellow, red, orange, peach,
bronze or pink from spring to frost

Full sun to light shade

Moist, well-drained, slightly acid soil

No serious pests

Cold-hardy in USDA zones 9 to 11

Heat-tolerant in AHS zones 12 to 1

If there ever was a perfect container plant, calibrachoa is it. A trailing habit makes it great for hanging baskets, and a single plant can cover a container, like the ones at right. Or mix calibrachoa with other more upright or spiky annuals.

LOTS TO LIKE Just like petunias, this slightly fragrant annual blooms all summer and attracts hummingbirds. (Well, technically, it's a tender perennial, but most gardeners treat it as an annual.) But calibrachoa flowers hold up to rain better, don't need

**Cover your containers in
cascades of flowers!**

Calibrachoa

deadheading and don't form seeds that detract from the display. Even though the billowy flowers may slow a bit during the hottest part of summer, they come barreling back as the weather cools. With consistent moisture, they'll bloom right up until a hard frost or the days grow short.

A relative newcomer to the garden scene in North America, calibrachoa doesn't really have a common name yet. You may have heard it called mini petunia or million bells, which is actually a brand name. It does look like a smaller version of petunias, but with finer foliage and 1-inch flowers. Lots of series are on the market. Superbells®, Callie™, Million Bells® and Cabaret™ are some of the most popular ones. The colors you see in the photos at right are just a few of the dozens available at garden centers and nurseries.

HOW TO GROW IT With its blanket of flowers and trailing habit, calibrachoa really shines in containers and hanging baskets. In fact, it grows much better in containers than in the ground because it prefers the loose, slightly acid (pH of 5.5 to 6.5) soil in most potting mixes. When it's in alkaline soil, new growth will have a yellow tinge and the plant will be stunted and bloom poorly. Feed it monthly with a quarter-strength acid fertilizer, such as Miracid®, to keep the plant green and producing the most flowers.

And speaking of flowers, calibrachoa blooms best in full sun except in extreme heat, when some afternoon shade will prevent scorching. It'll flower with a little shade, but not as enthusiastically. Your plants may start to get lanky by midsummer. Check out "A quick perk-up" to learn how to remedy this.

Calibrachoa also likes even moisture, drooping a bit if it gets too dry. Usually a good soaking revives it, but don't overwater, either. If your plant stays droopy even after you water it, the roots have probably rotted and you'll need to replace the plant with another.

But calibrachoa's pretty undemanding. Just let the top inch of soil dry out between waterings and your plant will thrive and bloom happily. And you'll have color cascading down your favorite containers all season long! □

— Deborah Gruca

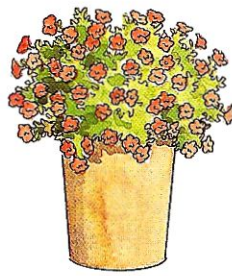
A quick perk-up



By mid- to late summer, calibrachoa may start to look a bit tired, with some brown stems and foliage mixed in among the newer growth.



To undercut, lift the stems and pinch out any with dead foliage. Don't worry — you won't hurt the plant if you take some green, too.



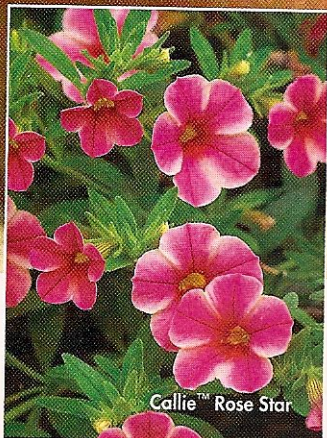
The plant responds with a flush of new growth and flowers within a couple of weeks, especially if you give it a shot of fertilizer, too.



You can see where Superbells® gets its name. It's available in many colors, including the Tequila Sunrise, Red and Plum you see here.



Superbells® Plum



Callie™ Rose Star



Million Bells® Trailing Blue



Cabaret™ Yellow