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# NEIL SPERRY'S Gardens

THE DEFINITIVE WORD IN TEXAS HORTICULTURE

## *Fresh Starts*

### **SEEDLING SECRETS**

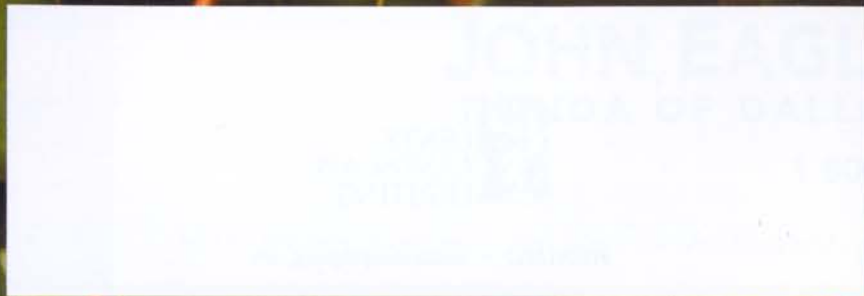
Starting your own transplants from seed

### **BARE BEAUTIES**

Trees with exfoliating bark for winter interest

### **RAISED-BED GARDENING**

An overwhelmed vegetable gardener tastes success



In some states, the brilliant autumn foliage of deciduous trees is the first sign of fall, but in Texas, I contest that pansy planting is one of the true signals that fall and winter are here. The many-colored and versatile pansy is ubiquitous from the Gulf Coast to the Panhandle. Why? Because they are easy to grow, tough as can be, and absolutely beautiful. Our winter- and early-spring landscapes would be incredibly

also have some solid velvety purple and pure yellow flowers that are ruffled. The 'Frizzle Sizzle' series of pansy comes in four colors and a mix. 'Frizzle Sizzle Blue' has deep indigo blue-faced flowers with ruffles of azure to silvery white-blue. 'Frizzle Sizzle Burgundy', my personal favorite, has the same dark dramatic face with ruffles of a glowing plum purple. 'Frizzle Sizzle Yellow' has dark faces with ruffles of pale creamy yel-

low to dark gold. Finally, 'Frizzle Sizzle Yellow Blue Swirl' has a dark-mahogany, whiskered face surrounded by daffodil yellow with frosted ruffles of sky blue.

Both varieties produce well-branched, compact plants that flower constantly. Although these pansies are perfectly suitable for mass planting, I prefer putting their fluffy faces up close in containers where I can enjoy them more. This also lets you experience their

# 'Frizzle Sizzle' and 'Fizzy Lemonberry'

*These new pansies sport ruffles and frills*

Jimmy Turner

dull without them. Pansies and their close relatives, the violas, come in every flower size and color imaginable, which makes them adaptable to any garden scheme. So what could possibly be new and different in this familiar plant? How about ruffled flowers! The new 'Fizzy Lemonberry' and 'Frizzle Sizzle' series of pansies were a big hit in our trial garden last year with guests and also with me. Not only did the unique flowers stand out, the plants performed exceptionally well.

Both varieties have 2- to 3-inch flowers with blossoms that have ruffled and frilled petals. The effect is something completely different, with the blossoms almost forming rounded pom-poms. Guests in the garden were instantly attracted to the unique flowers. 'Fizzy Lemonberry' has deep-purple-faced flowers of lemon yellow edged with glowing lavender. This cultivar will



*'Fizzy Lemonberry' produces masses of pansy faces in deep purple and lemon yellow, edged in lavender.*

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unexpected soft, sweet fragrance! Their fluted flowers mix wonderfully with the soft-textured foliage of dusty miller or kale. I especially love the combination of 'Frizzle Sizzle Burgundy' with red bor kale, highlighting their similar ruffled edges and colors.

Like all pansies, these are exceptionally easy to grow. Make sure to site them where they receive at least six hours of direct sunlight per day, and plant in well-drained soil amended with compost. For the best bloom, I recommend mixing a high-nitrogen, timed-release or organic fertilizer into the soil before planting. When planting, if the plant is root-bound, gently break the rootball apart. This will help the plants develop roots most quickly. Planting should occur when soil temperatures are between 45 and 70

degrees, but pansies are tough enough to survive planting anytime from early fall until late winter. Purchase from local nurseries in 4-inch pots; I don't recommend trying to grow your own from seed. Although pansies are easy to grow, it's difficult for Texans to start them from seeds. They need cool nighttime temperatures to sprout, and that doesn't happen in July and August here, when they need to be germinating and growing. Mulch plants after planting with 2 inches of pine bark or compost to conserve water, protect from cold weather, and retard weeds. Both varieties have a high tolerance for severe cold once established, but the flowers may freeze during temperatures in the teens.

While pansies are popular edible flowers for humans, they are also tasty to a few pests. Aphids are usually a sign that your plants are either water-stressed or not receiving enough sunlight. If the flowers look chewed, then you probably have slugs or snails visiting them at night. There are multiple control methods for both. And if you live in areas with deer, then plant the pansies close to the house and guard them, because deer love to nibble the plants and flowers.

Root rot may occasionally attack all varieties of pansies and violas. If you've had pansies yellow and wither quickly, then you have experienced it. Prevention is the best medicine for this problem — make sure your soil is well drained, and do not overwater. If you have clay soil, incorporate expanded shale to increase drainage. Also make sure your plants are receiving good air movement and full sun.

The word *pansy* is traced back to the French word *pensee*, meaning *thought* or *remembrance*, and I truly think that every guest to your garden will “remember” these new pansies. Whether you choose to add the flavor of ‘Fizzy Lemonberry’ or a little ‘Frizzle Sizzle’, you are guaranteed to spice up your garden. ★

**About the author:** Jimmy Turner is senior director of gardens at the Dallas Arboretum and a contributing editor to this publication. Visit [www.dallasplanttrials.org](http://www.dallasplanttrials.org) for more information on his trials.



*‘Frizzle Sizzle’ boasts compact plants with an ongoing production of fluted pansy flowers, as well as a soft, sweet fragrance.*

#### AT A GLANCE

**Latin name:** *Viola x wittrockiana* ‘Frizzle Sizzle’ series and ‘Fizzy Lemonberry’

**Common name:** Ruffled pansy

**Flowers:** 2-3” ruffled flowers

**Mature height:** 6 - 8”

**Spacing:** 6 - 8”

**Hardiness:** Cool-season annual

**Soil:** Well-drained, organic

**Exposure:** Full sun

**Water usage:** Medium

**Sources:** Local nurseries