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Iresine: *Flowering and Stalled Growth*

Iresine herbstii 'Aureoreticulata' requires long days to remain vegetative. Under short day conditions, plants will flower and produce fewer cuttings.

Iresine (*Iresine herbstii* 'Aureoreticulata') or commonly called the Chicken Gizzard plant, is grown for its variegated foliage. Last spring there are a few cases where iresine stock plants were observed with flowers and stalled growth (Fig. 1).

The desired characteristic of active growth in which a large number of cuttings can be taken is the result of long day conditions. Iresine plants flower under short day conditions of winter (Fig. 2). With all the energy going into flower production, the overall plant growth stalls. This can be a production challenge when trying to grow out a full sized plant for spring production or when the plant is a stock and you want to harvest vegetative cuttings.

Flower formation in iresine is a short day response. Vegetative growth occurs under long day conditions. From September 21st until March 21st in the northern hemisphere is the time to provide day length extension so the days are 14 hours long or a night interruption to avoid flowering. A typical tactic is to place the plants under lights from 10 pm to 2 am (Fig. 3). If the plants are grown with other light sensitive plants such as

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Figure 1. Flower development occurs under short day conditions with iresine.
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poinsettias, black cloth will need to be pulled to avoid light pollution to those sensitive plants.

If your plants have flowers, then give them a hard pinch so that you remove the flowers and about 4 inches of the smaller reproductive leaves. Place the plants under long day conditions. Provide them with adequate fertility to encourage growth. From my observations, regrowth can be sporadic and often times plants are delayed because of the lag time required for them to size up.

Key Points.

In summary, iresine need long days to avoid stalled growth and flower formation. Lighting should be provided so that the day is extended to 14 hours or provide a night lighting interruption to avoid flowers.



Figure 2. Flowering of iresine results in less vegetative growth and less cuttings that can be harvested from the plant.

Photo by Brian Whipker



Figure 3. To keep plants vegetative, provide night interruption lighting or extend the day length to 14 hours. Here is a lighting set up used by a commercial operation to provide long days.
Photo by Brian Whipker

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