



By [Richard Flowers](#) ACCNPro-Green Thumb Nursery Ventura

Do you want to add some pizzazz to your front entry-way with copious amounts of flowers during spring and summer? Imagine having gorgeous trailing masterpieces inviting you with warm colorful flowers that attract hummingbirds and repeat bloom over and over again. Million Bells provides you a profusion of many different cheerful colors that require no deadheading (removing old spent flowers) and are easy to grow.

Million Bells' botanical name is *Calibrachoa* and is native to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay. The original plants were found in coastal areas clinging to rocks and surviving in some pretty harsh conditions. These new plants were taxonomically described in 1989 and the first cultivars were released to the public in 1992. Since their release, this species has become increasingly popular. Million Bells are related to such common plants as the Pepper, Tomato, Eggplant, and Petunia. In fact, the flowers even resemble Petunias but on a smaller scale.

Requiring full to partial sun, Million Bells only grows 6 to 10 inches high and 12 to 18 inches wide, which makes them a perfect candidate to spill over the sides of a nice decorative pot on your patio. They produce hundreds of 1" flowers in a rainbow of colors ranging from violet, blue, pink, red, magenta, yellow, and bronze, to white. They are effective when used in window boxes on your balcony to provide a curtain of color splashing down the sides. This species also looks fantastic when used with other blooming flowers as well. Try using grey foliage Dusty Miller and pink flowering Angelonia (Summer Snapdragon) with a red or yellow flowered Million Bells to soften the edges of a planter.

To have your Million Bells thrive and look its best, it is highly recommended to provide regular watering's but to not over water; keeping plants too wet can lead to root rot diseases. Usually a tell-tail sign of this condition is if your plant is wilting even though the soil is still

damp. A rule of thumb in watering is to allow the top of the soil to dry before irrigating again. It is imperative to provide soil with excellent drainage. I highly suggest when growing in pots to make sure the planting container has drainage holes on the bottom and water comes out during each watering cycle. Use a good fast draining potting soil like EB Stone Edna's Best Potting Soil or Azalea Camellia Mix. The best way to water is to irrigate when the top of the soil is dry to the touch a few inches down (usually this means to water 2 to 3 times per week depending on conditions).

Million Bells tolerates both heat and dry conditions. For them to flower and grow optimally, it is best to provide 4 to 6 hours of direct sun a day; with anything less, flowering will decrease and the foliage will be light green. Since they put out constant flowers all summer, they need to keep their strength up, thus it is advised to give them a light pruning by taking off 1 to 4 inches symmetrically around the plant, as this will keep your Million Bells neat and tidy while encouraging them to branch which results in a fuller plant with more flowers as it grows.

To keep Million Bells looking good and strong, it is best to feed them on a regular basis. When fertilizing, use a liquid feed that has the numbers 20-10-20 every other week, or every 4 months if you choose to use a time release fertilizer like Osmocote. Please remember to follow the label directions before application. Sometimes you may need to add iron as an additional plant food if the leaves remain light green.

If you want to spruce up your patio or outdoor area, stop on by your favorite Green Thumb Nursery, we will have something for you.

[RICHARD FLOWERS](#) is a certified ACCNPro (Advanced California Certified Nursery Professional). He is also a life-long gardener. Richard has been with the Green Thumb Nursery in Ventura, California for over 12 years, and prior to that he worked at other retail garden centers for 7 years. RICHARD received a horticulture certificate from the Los Angeles Pierce two year program, as well as a horticulture certificate from the Ventura College two year program.

