

Early Winter Asters

Asters can be a very profitable crop. They produce and keep well. The newer varieties available today have considerably better flowers and stems than those of a few years ago.

To obtain production figures and a few basic facts about out-of-season asters in Colorado, seed of five of the best varieties obtainable were sown August 15. The plants were lighted from the seedling stage until the first flowers showed color. These asters were benched at a spacing of 6 x 6 inches on September 8, and pinched as the terminal buds cleared, taking one or two lateral breaks with the terminal bud. No other thinning was done.

As the flowers were cut they were graded into two arbitrary grades as follows:

No. 1--20 grams or more in weight with stems 20 inches or longer.

No. 2--Less than 20 grams in weight and less than 20-inch stems.

Since the majority of the flowers were in the No. 2 grade, a more accurate picture of quality would have been revealed by splitting that group with a third and least desirable grade. In addition to the flowers in these grades, there were quite a few that were not included in the records because they were weak and thin. Wider planting and thinning should eliminate much of this trash and improve the quality of the remaining flowers.

Flowers were cut from this crop of asters from December 19 to January 19. Ball Purple #2 was about one week earlier than the other varieties. Ball White and Ball Rose produced the best quality from the standpoint of flower size and stem strength. Ball Purple #2 produced smaller flowers but strong stems. All varieties should have been improved by some thinning.

The crop occupied a producing bench 19 weeks. The five varieties produced 10 to 18 flowers per square foot, most of which were highly saleable. On the basis of our observations on this crop the following are suggested:

- 1). Space no closer than 8 x 8 inches.
- 2). Thin the plants to the best 13 flowers per square foot of bench or the best 6 per plant.
- 3). Stop lighting about 20 to 30 days before flowering. Lights do not cause asters to initiate buds or flower. They do stretch the stems and make the plants taller. The same light intensity used for chrysanthemums is satisfactory for asters.

Summary---Early Winter Aster Crop Production

Variety	Per ft. ²	Production		Percent
		No.1	No.2	No.1
Ball White	10.7	100	161	38.3
Ball Pink	12.9	66	249	20.9
Ball Rose	15.3	92	215	30.0
Ball Purple				
#2	18.3	51	306	13.9
Azure Ball	16.2	83	242	25.5