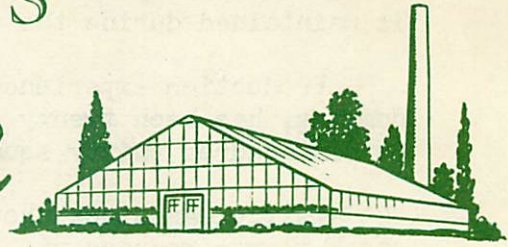




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A NEW SLANT ON GERANIUM CUTTING PRODUCTION

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Cuttings from geranium plants grown outdoors in more temperate areas are frequently infected with disease. Many discriminating growers prefer home grown stock which, when properly handled, is less apt to be diseased.

Old Plan

The old plan of stock production in northern greenhouses was to bench the plants and grow them for two or three years. Production was fair the first year, but better in the second and third years. After three years, new plants replaced the old. Production costs with this system were relatively high and the number of cuttings available when the demand was greatest was less than desired.

New Plan

A new plan was worked out by Jud Haney (Michigan State) and me at a late evening "bull session" after a short course. The new plan calls for benching the cuttings directly in sterilized soil at a 12 by 12 inch spacing the first week of June. Ground beds are undesirable as the growth becomes too soft and the nodes too far apart. In addition the control of soil moisture is difficult during the winter.

One shoot of each plant is allowed to develop straight up without a pinch. As the plant develops side breaks, they are soft pinched to three leaves or nodes. Two new breaks will develop from each pinch and with continued pinching, many side breaks will develop. The plant will be about four feet tall by Oct. 1 and staking is necessary as the plant grows. Rose stakes are preferred and Twistems are used for tying. At all times during this period the largest and oldest leaves are removed to allow more light and air to reach the lower portion of the plant. Surprisingly, the base of the plant will produce a large number of shoots. These are also pinched once and allowed to break. Cuttings are taken from October until March 1 or 15, depending on the need of bench space for spring bedding plants.

In a 12-months period (benching to dumping out) with constant fertilizing with a 25-10-10 mixture (1-200), production should be 45 to 50 cuttings per square foot.

For anyone specializing in growing R.C geraniums commercially, stock should be carried eighteen months and then dumped. This year we expect to try growing our stock for 2 years in one of the benches. A night temperature of 56 to 60° is maintained during the winter.

Production experienced in La Crosse for a twelve month period, benching to dumping, has been twenty six thousand cuttings from five hundred ninety two plants on six hundred thirty square feet of bench space.

Only clean stock should be used in this program. The presence of diseased stock plants reduces yield and also eliminates the major advantage obtained by using home grown stock.

(The author requests that anyone who may desire to reprint this article please contact him first.)