

AUTOMATIC WATERING FOR POT PLANTS

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In recent years, many more growers are producing plants in containers. They are finding labor more costly and a supply of adequate help hard to obtain. As a result, many are looking to automation as to a tool in producing plants in containers.

Plastic irrigation systems are quite an aid to the grower:

- 1) They enable the watering of more plants at once.
- 2) Watering is more uniform.
- 3) Shelves and hanging pots may be watered with ease.
- 4) Fertilizer and water may be applied in one operation.
- 5) Best of all, labor is reduced.

The plastic tube irrigation system is designed so that each plant receives its own irrigation tube. These tubes are held in the container by weights or fasteners. A prescribed number of spaghetti-like plastic tubes are connected to a common header. The header is in turn connected to a supply line in which a valve and line strainer are inserted. The systems may be operated manually or automatically. Automatic controls may be as simple or as elaborate as you desire.

The time clock can be a 24-hour clock connected in a series with a 60-minute timer to control irrigations on all portions of the day. The scale controller will actuate the irrigation system in response to a definite weight loss from the (pot-soil) plant system set on it.

In order that plant growth may be at its optimum, a light, well-aerated soil is desirable when automatic watering devices are used. The UConn mix (3 parts soil, 2 parts peat and 1 part sharp washed sand) is appropriate for most floriculture crops. The usual cost of these devices is between 8 and 15 cents per pot. These cost figures may vary depending on the quantity and type of system purchased, and especially the control system you choose. The most commonly used systems include the E-flomatic System, the Chapin System, and several variations.

It is up to each grower, large or small, to evaluate his situation and to choose the automatic watering system which best fits his needs.