

Carnations

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Q. What is the best method of handling carnations before they are benched?

A. Consensus of several growers: Direct planting of rooted cuttings in the bench is preferred to planting out-of-doors or in bands. Where it is necessary to plant outdoors it is recommended that cuttings be planted in bands placed close together in beds and that the soft well-branched plants be moved into the greenhouse in July. Cuttings planted in the permanent location at the same time as plants planted outdoors have been found to reach essentially the same size by September and although the plants from cuttings were softer they generally cut more flowers.

A. Arthur Peterson: June is the best month for planting in Massachusetts.

Q. What is the best spacing distance for carnations?

A. Most growers have changed to a 3" x 4" planting distance and found the closer planting superior.

Q. Should direct benched cuttings be pinched?

A. Where the cuttings were planted directly into the bench between November 1 and the middle of February they were grown unpinched but after February the plantings were pinched once in order to get longer stems. The use of rooted cuttings spread out production as compared to the use of large plants and reduced the extreme peaks and the time between peaks.

A. Examples of several growers experience were these:

Lily Ohye: planted Aphrodite cuttings the first of September which cropped for Mother's Day and continued fairly steady until the following January.

Jack Penn: planted Apollo cuttings in June. Gave one pinch. The crop started in October and continued through December; off crop in January.

Arthur Peterson: planted Littlefield cuttings in December. Started cutting the flowers for Easter and came in with a repeat for Mother's Day. Achilles gave a more steady cut with lower peaks. Midas was planted January 1 and 80% were cut by the fifth of April and 99% by the tenth of April. The 1% which were not blooming were then pulled out and discarded. The ones left cropped again in June and continued throughout the summer. They were pulled out in November to make room for another planting.

Q. Which blooms first, the plants given more room or those placed more closely?

A. (From several growers) There is a tendency for plants spaced more closely to bloom earlier. Several felt it was entirely practical to keep carnation plants in for a year and a half and that attempts at cropping should be aimed at the holidays. Avoid the month of June if possible.

Q. Have artificial lights been used on carnations?

A. No U. S. grower has tried lights on carnations in recent years because our nights are not as short as they are in England. In England, lighting is profitable. In this country where lights are used, they tend to speed production but soften growth.

Q. Is there going to be an increase in carnation production on the West Coast?

A. It is reported that California is growing acres of carnations under plastic covers and that that state is becoming more of a factor in the market in the west and south. Botrytis is a serious problem but if it can be licked, the California carnations top the market.

Q. What can we do about splits?

A. They are generally not a problem where temperatures can be controlled. It was suggested that when day temperatures went as high as 80 to 90°F, the house should be held the following night at 55 to 65°F and the night temperatures only lowered gradually. Heat should be started in the afternoon before side or top ventilators are closed tight to keep the humidity down and the temperature steady. It is reported that England and Italy have more split carnations than the United States. The variety Virginia has many less splits than most other commonly grown varieties.

Q. Is there any benefit in shading during the summer months?

A. (From a grower) Using shade in 1953 increased the cut by 10,000 flowers but the quality was poorer.

A. Another grower suggested the young plants be left unshaded but that older benches be shaded to get larger flowers and to improve the color of light pinks.

Q. Does peat moss have any value in carnation soils?

A. It seems to give as good results as manure and is much easier to use. Any soil could be used with the peat provided the result was an open, friable soil.

A. (From a grower) England is also using peat but some growers are using sand or gravel with constant water level or sub-irrigation. They commonly leave their plants in for two to three years.

Q. What is the best method of soil sterilization?

A. Dr. Dimock: Steam is the best. Larvacide is good but methyl bromide should not be used for carnations.

A. Jack Penn: I use the buried pipe method of steaming because it is quicker.

A. (Other growers) Most preferred the Thomas Method as being easier and because the soil did not have to be disturbed before planting. Leaching was not needed after fumigation if the last two liquid feeds were omitted.

Q. What is the best thing for insect control?

A. Dr. Naegele: Suggested the use of malathion to replace parathion because of less hazard to the men. Where spiders are resistant to the phosphate, aramite bombs can be used. Systox as a soil drench at 1 quart of the 21% emulsifiable in a convenient amount of water per 1,000 square feet might be tried for spiders and aphids. It does not control thrips. There have been reports that dithio smokes have caused sleepiness when the greenhouse was not open until morning, but when it was ventilated in four hours this did not occur. Parathion smokes have often given poor results apparently because the heat developed breaks down the insecticide. This does not usually occur with dithio smokes.

Q. Are diseases a problem on stored carnation cuttings?

A. Diseases are not usually a problem on rooted cuttings stored at 31°F but the propagating bench can be treated with Zineb to reduce the danger of botrytis.