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Fall Planting of Carnations

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Interest seems to be increasing among European growers in the late planting of carnations to take advantage of good prices during the spring months. While almost all carnations are planted in Colorado in May and June, there are occasions when a grower may wish to consider September and October planting. New construction completed late in the season, unusual disease losses or unsatisfactory recovery of older plants following summer may cause one to consider fall planting. How do these late plants perform? Should they be spaced closer? When do they flower and how good are the flowers?

In combination with another experiment, 3 replicated blocks of White Pikes Peak cuttings were planted on November 7, 1963. These were spaced 6 X 6 inches, or 4 to the square foot. Half of each block of 84 plants was pinched above the 5th lateral break as soon as they were visible. The pinch was delayed on the other half until the tip could be removed above the top vegetative break. These different methods of pinching had little effect on the grade of flowers cut but delayed the first crop an average of 3 days. Pinching to 5 laterals limited the first crop and reduced yield 2 flowers per square foot (Table 1). Late pinching increased the time for the first crop to cut off. Had the records continued through June the difference in yield would have been greater.

While this planting date is too late for Easter and Mother's Day, it shows the spread and timing of a fall planted crop (Figure 1), and indicates

what one can expect in yield and grade (Table 1). When spring prices are applied to Table 1, dollar value can also be calculated.

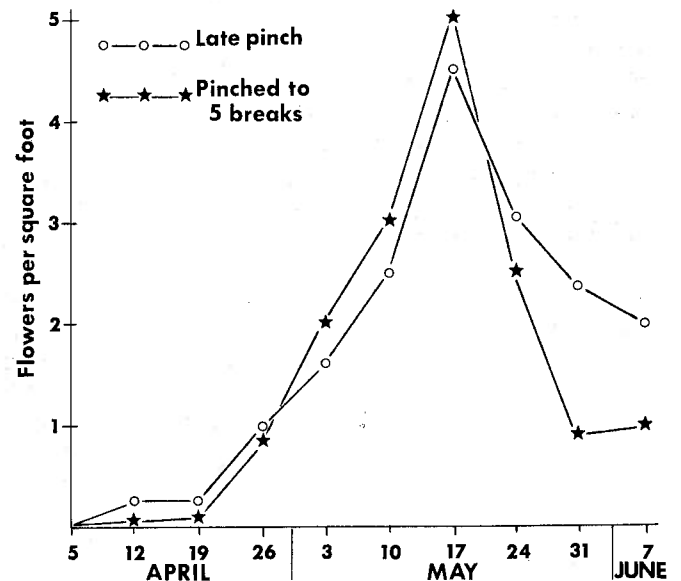


Fig. 1. The distribution of first-crop flowers from a November 7 planting.

Grade of first-crop flowers that develop during the short days of winter and early spring is not limited by stem length. Size and strength of stem may reduce the grade from fancy to standard and some of the flowers cut at the end of the crop were in the design grade. Note that there were no flowers in the short grade for this crop.

Theoretically, planting 4 plants/sq. ft. should produce 20 or more flowers/sq. ft. on the first crop, if each plant develops a minimum of 5 breaks after pinching. This was the case with this planting, however the complete first crop is not shown in the graph or table. The late pinching method resulted in 29.5 breaks per square foot while 20.6 breaks developed on the plants that were pinched to 5 breaks. The average grade of flowers was about equal but the 5-break method cropped a few days earlier.

Young plants that have produced a first crop in spring are in superb condition for a second crop of high quality flowers in summer or for pinching in June to bring in high quality flowers from mid-August and later.

Table 1. Yield per square foot of bench area and grade of first crop of flowers from November 7 planting of White Pikes Peak. Time flowers were cut is shown in figure 1.

<u>Treatment</u>	<u>Design</u>	<u>Grade</u>		<u>Total</u>
		<u>Standard</u>	<u>Fancy</u>	
Late pinch	0.1	11.3	5.6	17.8
Pinched to 5 breaks	0.5	11.3	3.9	15.7