

FLOWER IMPORTS

Almost all flower exporters sooner or later look to Germany for a market. Why? Because Germany has a strong currency and an affluent society. Germany's first imports began coming in during the fifties. Today flowers come from almost every exporting country including some behind the Iron Curtain. What has this done to their flower and plant industry? It has caused problems and some revision of the crops produced. But the German floriculture industry is probably the strongest it has ever been. We in the U.S. can learn by studying the methods used by the Germans.

Most of us think of the Germans as being a flower buying people — but this has not always been so. In the years before the War only the rich were regular buyers of flowers in Germany. These were purchased as florist-made arrangements as opposed to bunched flowers and pot plants of today. The main upsurge in the German market came at the time Dutch and Danish exporters began promotional campaigns in Germany during the fifties. They made tough competition for the German producer.

The German population became more affluent as industry began to flourish. Everybody had more money to spend. Stimulated no doubt by the growing imports, the flower industry set its house in order and began to compete effectively for the home market. Today, German nurseries have the major share of their market and they are the biggest exporters of ornamentals in Europe. They ship pot plants all over Europe including Italy, cut flowers to France, Switzerland, Austria and Sweden, and nursery stock all over the world.

In its fight for the market German industry has applied three important rules:

1. It has developed products suitable for mass retailing. The Germans were the first to develop pot plants in smaller and easier to handle pots.
2. Germany has done a tremendous job in reorganizing the wholesaling and retailing network to make sure the buying public finds a wide choice of flowers and plants. Automats, super market sales, and balcony planting all had their beginnings in Germany.
3. German industry has embarked on vast and sustained promotional campaigns financed by the whole industry. This promotion is now assisted in part by the German Ministry of Agriculture — but the first and most of the support for promotion came from the flower and nursery industry. This promotion cost to the grower is reputed to be around 0.3% of gross sales. The U.S. flower industry has the tools through SAF. We could do well to keep a person in Germany to study their methods at all levels. Their promotion methods have worked.

Your Editor,



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