

## GERBERA PRODUCTION

Consumer acceptance and economy of production are two factors that need to be further evaluated in the development of the Gerbera as a major cut flower in California. This is the conclusion of

D. E. Smith and R. L. Nelson of the Department of Environmental Horticulture at UCD. They feel that the wide range of available colors and flower types promises a definite consumer demand. From a production standpoint, however, they indicate that there have not been enough quality blooms produced to provide an adequate test of market potential.

Several trials have been initiated with cooperating growers in various parts of the state, including several of the San Francisco Bay Area. Much useful cultural information has been obtained. Smith and Nelson recently reported the results of one such trial in Redwood City. It was begun in 1966 in cooperation with R. H. Sciaroni, Farm Advisor, and the Nakano Nursery.

Plants from thirty clones of UC hybrids were planted in raised steam-sterilized ground beds. After twelve months observation, twenty of these clones were selected as potential commercial varieties and were vegetatively propagated. These "single lead" divisions were planted September 3, 1966 on 12-inch by 12-inch spacings, filling a total of 500 square feet of bench space. Cultural practices followed throughout the trial were similar to those used to produce high quality standard chrysanthemums in the same plastic-covered house.

Total production of the 500 square feet averaged 42 salable flowers per square foot per year. These counts do not include flowers that were damaged by insects or insecticides, or that were otherwise unsalable.

Monthly production of all clones in this test (in dozens sold) included:

October - 35	April - 145
November - 58	May - 230
December - 80	June - 209
January - 95	July - 247
February - 124	August - 188
March - 166	September - 155

Cultural conditions favored high yields throughout the trial. However, three factors undoubtedly depressed production:

1. Plants from single lead divisions were slow to form the necessary number of growing points required for maximum production.
2. Late propagation (September) probably depressed winter yield.
3. Wide differences in yields between clones were noted.

Unacceptable differences in vase life were also noted. The most productive clone did not necessarily exhibit the most desirable vase characteristic. It is evident from this trial that each clone must be tested for yield and keeping quality, as well as form and color. Continued selective breeding should minimize much of this variability.

Smith and Nelson are of the opinion that Gerbera can be economically produced as a cut flower. They cite the production figures observed in this and other trials, and the fact that a minimal amount of labor is required (compared to other cut-flower crops such as roses, carnations and chrysanthemums).

**PESTICIDE RECOMMENDATIONS** ... Our suggestions for pest control are based on the best information currently available for each pesticide listed. If followed carefully, they should result in satisfactory control. To obtain the best results, follow the directions carefully with respect to dosage levels, number of applications and minimum interval between applications. The grower is responsible for residues on his own crop as well as for problems caused by drift from his property to other properties or crops.

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