

Care & Handling

Green Plant Care

THE RESURGENCE IN GREEN PLANTS (SEE FRESH Choices, p. 16) is “a long time coming,” says Joan Mazat, business manager of pot plants and cut flowers at Ball Seed in West Chicago, Ill. Mazat says you don’t have to be a garden center to capitalize on it — retail florists can be successful in the potted green plant market with smart buying, care and display tactics. Here are Mazat’s tips:

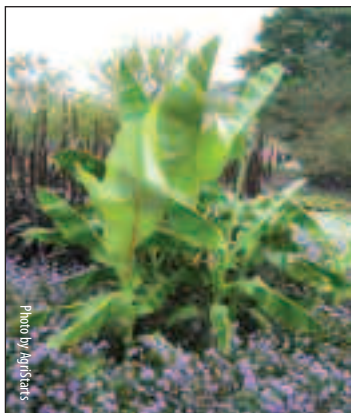
Choosing a Supplier

Work with suppliers who can give you lots of information about the plants, including things such as how large the plants are and how many plants per pot. They also may be able to send you a trial shipment of a few pots, or at least digital photos of the crop, so you can get a good look. If it’s a local grower, see if you can pay them a visit. If they’re proud to show off their crops, that’s a good sign that they have quality product — otherwise, beware.

Upon arrival: Immediately unpack the plants and turn over the leaves to check for disease or insects. Make sure you have the correct count of plants purchased, and check to see if they need any water.

Asking for Credit

The best route: Ask for a claim policy up front, so there are no surprises. Then, if you need to make a claim, do it as soon as possible after arrival, but be reasonable. For instance, if one 4-inch plant is damaged or unusable, asking for a credit might not be reasonable. If it’s a high-cost item, it’s under-



NOW THAT’S A BANANA! Tell customers that banana plants such as this one (*Musa basjoo*) are cold and hardy — they can transplant them from pot to garden, like this one in Ball Seed’s trial garden in West Chicago, Ill.



Info To Go

Map it Out

For an easy-to-read chart detailing temperature requirements and ethylene sensitivity of a variety of green plants, click on the Info to Go logo on SAF’s member Web site, www.safnow.org. Or, get it via Fast Fax, by calling (888) 723-2000 and requesting document #833.

Fern and Banana Plant Tips

Here are some additional tips for caring for the ferns and banana plants mentioned in this month’s Fresh Choices column:

Tell your fern buyers to be sure to cut and divide plants as they overgrow their pots. And remind them to fertilize their houseplants about once a month and clean away dead foliage, so that all of the leaves can benefit from the sunlight (the ones obscured from the light will turn yellow).

Remember that banana plants need to stay moist, or else they’ll wilt and their leaf edges will burn. If they wilt severely, new leaves will come from the center growth point — but you’ll need to take them out of the retail display and let them recover in a greenhouse. But, it’s a lot cheaper just to keep them moist.

— Joan Mazat

E-mail: jmazat@ballseed.com

standable to ask for credit. This is where having a good relationship with your vendor is key.

Displays that Say, “Buy Me!”

Natural light is best for displaying foliage plants. Remember that displaying plants in mass makes for more effective presentations and increases sales. Good spacing and airflow will increase the longevity in the display — plus cut down on plant damage — as consumers shop through the display. Display plants so they’re close enough to create a lush display but are not smashed together. And, be sure your plant displays are far enough away from your shop’s entrance to avoid cold blasts of winter air as customers come and go. Be sure the plants stay moist, but are not standing in water or still in their sleeves.

Using different styles of containers — from traditional to contemporary — allows you to hit all consumer levels, as the customers come from all walks of life and taste. The pots they are sold in can make or break a plant sale: Containers in eye-catching colors and styles will attract consumers looking for some flair to add to their home décor.

Use props to add value: glitter sticks, raffia or moss to cover the soil at the top of the pot. A tiny birdhouse or butterfly, depending on the look of the season, can add value to a potted plant. 🌿

Kate F. Penn is editor in chief of Floral Management and SAF’s vice president of publishing and communications. E-mail: kpenn@safnow.org.