

GREENHOUSE RECORDS

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The purpose of keeping greenhouse records is to indicate how to make the most efficient use of our time in terms of the most profit produced as a return for the equipment, materials and man hours expended. Many growers do not keep good records because they feel that their operation is too small to make the job of record-keeping worthwhile. Other growers do not keep records because they feel that their operation is so large and involved that the cost would be prohibitive.



Actually, record-keeping if it is well done and intelligently studied can pay its cost many times over in providing better direction of effort, weeding out unprofitable crops, avoiding bad markets and in providing an accurate measuring stick of the comparative values of various cultural techniques. It is also of extreme importance in providing a record of operations so that good results may be duplicated year after year.

Our records at Weston divide themselves into three main groups, each with a definite purpose in view:

First - Records of production method. Cards are kept for each individual block of stock that is grown on a bench. If two or more varieties are grown on a bench, the cards are pinned together on a larger card, so arranged as to provide a visible index. When only one variety is used on a bench, only one card is pinned to the larger card. These larger cards are perforated and bound in a loose-leaf binder, all in order by houses and by benches.

On these small individual cards columns are provided to show: source of

the plants - if purchased, from whom; if propagated from our own stock, a record of any special or ordinary stock is set down. This is sometimes very important if disease happens to appear in the flowering crop.

Date of sticking cuttings,
Date of removal from sand,
If stocked out, for how long,
Date of planting in permanent beds,
Date of pinches,
Date of pruning operations and record of what procedure used,
Date shading or lighting started.

The task of getting a record of these operations on paper during busy times is quite simple as in our establishment, instructions are given to employees by writing them rather than verbally. When the employees arrive on Monday morning, their work for the week is laid out for them on a clip board.

It is a simple matter to copy the record of these operations to the individual crop cards. At the same time we write these written instructions, any observations that are made at the time regarding apparent errors or suggestions as to how the procedure could be improved are noted also.

The card, when completed, gives us an accurate case history of the crop. It is surprising how often these cards enable us to trace the cause of any abnormal behaviour of any crop. We consider these records to be very valuable. Keeping them has paid off handsomely for us.

Second - Our next set of records are our records of production. As we operate, practically all of our sales are direct to retailers. Thus we are able to keep a very accurate record showing the bench from which every bunch or dozen of stock comes, also to whom the stock was sold and for how much. Our production record is made up of cards of a similar size to those used for cultural procedures. Each block of stock has an individual card, and the cards are filed in the same manner as those used for cultural procedures.

I have with me a sample record of a bench in one of our houses which all of you may study. You will note that it is a running record of all sales from each particular block of stock - the date of sale, the number of bunches or dozens and the price per unit. It is a simple matter to add up the units, add up the dollars, then divide by the number of square feet and we know what the production was in terms of bunches per square foot and dollars per square foot.

This record is made easy by our method of selling which consists of a large sheet divided into small squares. The horizontal lines represent the stock cut and to be sold, a separate line being used for each individual stock source. The vertical lines, in turn, represent the customers to whom it is sold. The sheet serves as an open inventory to the salesman making the sales. When the inventory is sold out, invoices are written from this sheet, sent to the packing room where the stock is packed and shipped. This may sound involved, but actually it is simple and we have found that the precise order that is established in the packing and shipping room more than saves the time necessary to record and accurately divide a day's cut amongst our customers. Actually, this is not an extra job any more than clear blue prints are an extra job in a building operation. They both save time and prevent mistakes and confusion.

From this cut sheet or inventory sheet, it is a simple matter to transfer

this record of over all sales to the individual crop record.

From these cards and our production records we can pick out poor yielding varieties. We can detect mistakes in cultural practice. We can, in short, accurately put our finger on the unprofitable spots in our production program.

Third - Our third set of records are those that most closely resemble the orthodox system of business books and have for their purpose the determination of our profit or loss position. They vary from the orthodox only in the fact that stress is placed on the segregation of the various items of expense such as wages, coal, containers, spray materials, truck operation, etc. At the end of each month the total spent on each item is tabulated and is entered on a sheet that shows the amount spent for each item of cost for the past month, the total to date for the year, the total to date for the corresponding month in the five preceding years. The gross receipts for the month and for the year to date are also shown. This is in lieu of the orthodox monthly balance. We believe this consolidated report of receipts and expenditures gives us a more comprehensive analysis of our business position. Any trends towards extravagant expenditures in any direction or for any item are immediately noticeable and the necessary steps taken to attempt a remedy.

This total expenditure can easily be segregated into expense or capital outlay. Our method of estimating crop costs is very simple, possibly not absolutely accurate, but in our business it is a workable approximation. We simply divide our total expense by the total bench area. This gives us a per square foot area cost. A comparison between our production record card with our over-all cost figures quickly segregates the real profitable items from those in the red. We do not pretend that this method of equalizing all expense over the entire area is really accurate, but some rather thorough records on some individual items have indicated to us that it is accurate enough to tell us when a crop is in the red or in the black.

In closing, I would again stress our conception of records. They are the blueprint, the compass, and the Radar of a business. They are not an extra expense. They are the purchase of a profitmaking tool.

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