

PLANT YOUR SHOP IN GARDENERS' LEAFY PATH

➤ Gardeners are in their glory now that summertime is here. But for florists, with the big holidays over, the demand for cut flowers usually drops as the temperature rises. Potted plants, however, can be the perfect botanical bait to lure customers into your shop when cut stems aren't the main magnet and gardeners are out in force.

According to the most recent USDA statistics, the wholesale value of domestically produced plants was \$1.13 billion for potted bedding and garden plants, \$698 million for potted flowering plants, \$630 million for potted foliage plants and \$403 million for cut flowers. The push to eat locally and save money have helped drive demand for patio and balcony container gardens (tomatoes, peppers, herbs, etc). Dozens of vegetable varieties have been bred to grow in containers and small spaces, and florists and garden centers are taking advantage of the supply and the demand by offering "garden to go" kits.

Inside Out?

Before you start clearing shelf space and offering grow-your-own veggie classes, consider your shop's ability to properly display each species. For instance, many potted foliage plants do well inside shops, especially those designed to stay indoors. Other potted flowering plants can be enjoyed indoors until the blooms finish. (Think: azaleas, begonias, gardenias, hyacinth, cyclamen, kalanchoe, miniature potted roses and mums.) These like higher

light provided by windows or outdoor spaces. Most bedding plants, such as impatiens, geraniums, petunias and pansies, generally need to be outside for adequate light levels to prevent flower and bud drop. Vegetable plants should go outside.

Greenhouse Effect

An enticing display for potted plants has to be more than just pretty, it needs to have adequate light and temperature conditions and easy access for watering. Choose a well-lit area, but avoid direct sunlight for most plants unless they are the outdoor, garden-variety types. Keep indoor display temperatures between 65-70F. Your display cooler can house mums, potted bulbs and other species that like it cool. Display coolers also help if you need to hold plants or slow flower development. Just make sure the flower types can take cool temperatures. Never keep tropical or foliage plants in temperatures below 55F.

Water Watch

Potted plants are more high maintenance than cut flowers when it comes to hydration. Water when the soil feels dry to the touch, but before wilt has set in. Don't get foliage or flowers wet, as moisture can be a breeding ground for diseases. If plants are displayed inside, they will need to sit in a saucer to collect water that has drained through the pot. Empty the saucers when finished watering so the pot never sits in standing water. If using pot covers, remove them during watering or

place them on the pot at the time of sale. There is no need to fertilize plants during display.

Potted orchids and bromeliads, a couple of terrific summer flowering plants, will tolerate store display conditions and provide consumers with flowers for many weeks. Check with your supplier to ensure orchids were treated with EthylBloc prior to or during shipment.

Without it, these ethylene-sensitive plants are prone to bud and flower drop.

Most potted flowering plants, especially foliage plants, have a long pot life. Inform customers which plants are best suited for indoor or outdoor use. And don't forget to tell them which ones can come to life outdoors after the blooms are spent inside. Offering a selection of potted plants during the active summer garden period can fill your shop with greenery, color, customers and help you avoid the summertime blues. 🌿

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WHAT'S GROWING ON?

Looking for something different to sell — or ideas for how to sell it — you're in luck. Annual shows, the display and trial gardens of universities, trade shows and conventions are ripe with new varieties and research. Local garden shows also are good for a gander and the websites of breeding companies offer plenty of eye candy.

Ball Horticultural

www.ballhort.com

Proven Winners

www.provenwinners.com

Pan/American Seed

www.panamseed.com

Selecta

firstclassplants.com/FCP/index.html

Syngenta

www2.syngenta.com/en/index.html

Green Leaf Plants (formerly Yoder Brothers)

www.gplants.com

All American Selections

www.all-americanselections.org/Winners.asp

International Floriculture Expo

www.floriexpo.com

Ohio Florist Association Short Course

www.ofa.org/shortcourseinfo.aspx

Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition

www.fngla.org/tpie



CAMPUS COLLECTION University trials, like this one at the University of Florida, offer a perfect window into what new varieties will be arriving soon.