

POT PLANTS IN FLOWER

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Trials at Aalsmeer EHS show that flowering pot plants should not be marketed until plenty of flowers are open on each plant. Using begonias, streptocarpus and saintpaulias, Aalsmeer staff demonstrated that plants which were moved into a simulated domestic environment, with low humidity and reduced light levels, only produced a good total open flower count if several flowers were already open at the time of the move.

There were some factors which favoured marketing less mature plants. In the case of streptocarpus the more

flowers that were open at the time of marketing, the greater the damage which occurred during a simulated transport period, in which the plants were held in the dark without added water for seven days.

With the other two species there was also an increase in the amount of botrytis rot during transport when the plants were more mature, although this could be controlled with a vinclozolin smoke treatment. Nonetheless, an open flower count of 10 to 20/plant should be the target to maximise the useful life in the home.