



FLOWER AND NURSERY REPORT

FOR COMMERCIAL GROWERS



POT ROSES FOR ST. VALENTINE'S DAY

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For the second consecutive year, potted rose plants were flowered for St. Valentine's Day. This year's cooperators were Bay City Flower Company and Nurserymen's Exchange, Inc., both of Half Moon Bay.

Cultivars 'Margo Koster,' 'Red Garnette,' and 'Thunderbird' were used with varying degrees of success. To assure blooming of these plants for the holiday, timing of digging, storing, potting, and forcing procedures had to be fairly precise. The plants were dug especially for this test by Tom DeVor of DeVor Nurseries, Hamilton City, California, on November 20, 1975. They were graded, packed, and placed in 35° to 36° F cold storage on November 21, 1975. The plants were removed from storage after three weeks. Canes were trimmed back to approximately 8 inches, and the plants were potted and placed in a greenhouse maintained at a 60° F night temperature on December 12, 1975.

Initially, plants were placed pot-to-pot on the bench and covered with a sheet of 4-mil polyethylene for the following 12 days. New shoots were approximately ¼ to ½ inch long when the polyethylene was removed. Thereafter, no particular cultural practices were used other than a minimum 60° F night temperature and 75° to 80° F day temperature, depending on available sunshine. All varieties were in bloom by February 5, 1976—the target date for this crop.

'Margo Koster' plants were the best shaped and full flowered of the test varieties. 'Red Garnette' plants had satisfactory height (under 24 inches). However, each shoot bore a single flower rather than a cluster, which is common on plants of later plantings. The sparse bloom might be reason enough to eliminate the variety for early forcing. 'Thunderbird' plants were entirely too tall (over 30 inches) in our estimation.

EVALUATION

Potted rose plants can be flowered commercially for St. Valentine's Day sale. This crop fits well into the pot-plant operation cycle in that it uses greenhouse space after poinsettias are shipped and before it becomes necessary to space the Easter lily and hydrangea crops.

Only non-patented varieties can be grown economically for February flowering; otherwise, plant cost is prohibitive. Test marketing indicated that resistance on the part of retailers was felt at \$4 or more per plant, wholesale value. Perhaps one-year-old field-grown plants can be used instead of the conventional two-year-olds now available. These would be smaller plants but perhaps better suited for mass-market outlets.

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