

Potted Plant Demand Good

Labor costs have caused growers to reduce potted plant production in favor of cut flowers. Many retail growers have become specialists and depend less and less on their local production. The demand is for reduced variety but increased supply of the few major crops.

Poinsettias - Sick

For the second year in succession western stock froze in the field. From 10 to 25 per cent of the plants received did not live. Much of the injury was at the ground line, the tops being alive but after a few shoots started, they died. In spite of this, growers produced ample cuttings. This experience two years in succession makes many growers want to save their stock. Many plants, normally dumped, are being carried over this year. With good control measures for mealy bugs, they should no longer be a problem.

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Stock plants start and produce much better at 70°F minimum than at lower temperatures. This, coupled with a good supply of water, gives optimum cutting production.

The real problem with plants, after propagating, begins to develop in late September. Shoestring bracts, curled down leaves, dead areas in the leaves, leaf fall, and uneven growth or even death of plants are the symptoms. The 1949 crop gave us much concern but last year we were even more impressed. The trouble has been attributed to such things as potash or phosphorus deficiency, 2,4-D injury, low temperature, low or high moisture, and other causes.

Practically all such injuries have been associated with root rot. Dimock has been following this trouble for the past two years and it appears to be a complex situation. Trouble is apparently initiated in the late summer in some cases but in the fall the plants tend to grow out of it. Even so, the resulting plant has been seriously injured and does not become the desirable subject it should be. In other cases, plants look good until early December, then begin to yellow and drop leaves, becoming completely defoliated by Christmas.

At present it looks like poinsettia growers should sterilize all soil, pots, benches and other equipment used. Soils low in fertility should be used to avoid soluble salt injury.

Prospects are for continued increase in poinsettia demand with it the most popular Christmas plant. If greater satisfaction could be given the customer, the demand would increase further.

Hydrangeas - Good

Hydrangeas will be good for Easter and should come sufficiently early if they have been properly stored. The fall temperature was optimum for bud set and development so that they should force easily at 60°F from the start.

Perhaps some buds set too early in many areas. Early pinching promoted this.

Azaleas - Normal

Azaleas forced fairly well for Christmas and will continue well during the year. More growers are becoming equipped to store plants at low temperature for early forcing and to hold plants in salable condition for long periods. 40°F storage does both.

Begonias - Few

Begonias and cyclamen continue to be in lesser demand each year. Prospects are for no revival of these crops because of the reduced demand for them.

Tuberous rooted begonias may find a place for cut flower production in winter in eastern United States now that we can grow them well at 60°F with long days. Lewis (Cornell) has demonstrated real possibilities for this as a corsage flower. Perhaps some of the multi-floras could be used as potted plants.

◆ This information was compiled with the assistance and information supplied by George Thompson, Agricultural Economics; A. W. Dimock, Plant Pathology; W. E. Blauvelt, Entomology; and Arthur Bing, Floriculture.

-- Kenneth Post

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