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with a prediction of how widespread their use will be.

"They have a place, which is areas where live plants will not grow," said Jerry Soowal, East Marsh Nursery Inc., Pompano Beach, FL. "They will have some effect, but they won't put us out of business. Our business will increase, because the market will increase."

Herb Koslow, Associated Crowers Inc., Delray Beach, FL, believes that because preserved plants don't look good when used alone, their use will increase the demand for foliage.

"They don't look good by themselves, but they look good when they

are used with live plants. They will enable people to put plants where they couldn't go before, so they'll increase business," Koslow said.

Barger also believes that preserved plants are not going to replace live materials, but they will provide an alternative that is preferable to artificial plants because "Mother Nature had a hand in their creation."

"I would be more worried if I was an artificial plant producer," Barger added.

One artificial plant producer isn't worried. Don Fisher, designer for Perma Plant Inc., Philadelphia, PA, has not seen Weyerhaeuser's product

but carried preserved plants five years ago.

"We got phone calls from customers saying they had dried out and the dyes had drained out," Fisher said. Additionally, Fisher believes preserved plants are too fragile to compete with silk plants. "I see the way our plants are thrown around, and preserved plants could never take that. They become brittle."

Mastick, who has a PhD in chemistry, also said preserved plants "may very well harden as the glycerin vaporizes." (Although Barger would not disclose if Weyerhaeuser's process involves glycerin, other processes

## Preliminary preservers: Who's preserving what

STABY

By Ross Brown

**W**eyerhaeuser is not the only company to enter into the preserved plant business recently. The companies that have recently announced they will be selling preserved plants are:

- Foliage Plus, Englewood, CO. Although this plant and foliage product company has been using its preservation technology for the past eight years, only the last year has been spent test marketing the product and studying production. The company's technology is based on a process bought from its Denver, CO, inventor in 1985.

According to Sam Ritchey, chief operating officer of Foliage Plus, the process is similar to Weyerhaeuser's and uses glycerin as the base chemical. The technology is different than Weyerhaeuser's, Ritchey said, in that the roots are removed for processing. (Weyerhaeuser would not reveal the technology of its preservation process nor confirm that the roots are left on plants when processed.)

Ritchey said the company will have six species available midway through this year. The company currently has an inventory of oak, aspen, eucalyptus and narrow-leaf cottonwood. The company will begin heavy production in summer.

Ritchey said he will not be able to discuss marketing plans for another 30 days. The company has, however, sold the rights to use the process to preserve native Japanese plants to a company in that country for \$15 million.

- Nature Preserved of America, San Clemente, CA.

This company was formed less than two months ago, but it will soon have immediate shipment of 12 varieties of palms. Shortly after that, the company will offer deciduous trees and two-week shipment of sourced material.

The firm's preservation process was developed by company partner Per Monie in Sweden, where he has been using the technology for a number of years. According to Dennis Gabrick, vice-president of sales and marketing, the process is totally unique. Gabrick said the company will be marketing its plants to interior landscapers and commercial contractors. Gabrick said the company's palm prices will be comparable to live material and less than silk products.

- Weyerhaeuser Co. Specialty Plant Business, Tacoma, WA. Weyerhaeuser's current line includes almost 70 products, including birch, cedar, cypress, eucalyptus, beech, oak, holly, juniper, pine, pineapple guava, salal, baby's-breath, Hedera helix (English ivy), statice, myrtle, Phoenix canariensis (Canary Island date palm) and Washingtonia robusta (Mexican fan palm). The company's research department is developing new products for preservation, and the product line will be updated.

The availability of specific products depends on the time of year and stock available. The business is making proposals and estimates for specific projects for interior landscapers.

Currently, the company has enough stock on hand for a few jobs. According to General Manager Steve Barger, the plants are "a premium-priced product," but with reduced maintenance, he believes they are comparable in cost to living plants.

The business moved into its current production facility last July and plans to open more production facilities around the US.

Ross Brown is assistant editor of Interior Landscape Industry.