

SEPTEMBER IS CRUCIAL MONTH FOR THE 1983 POINSETTIA CROP

Recommendations by Cornell University Floriculture Faculty

PROPAGATION PROCEDURE

Remove cuttings from stock plants using a sharp, clean knife. To avoid moisture stress, take cuttings in the very early morning or other cool times of the day. Do not refrigerate cuttings.

Use terminal cuttings 3-4 inches long. Dust the lower inch of the cuttings with a root promoting hormone powder. A puff duster is handy. *Do not dip* the ends of the cuttings in a powder. Root the cuttings in a propagation bench, in 2¼-in. or 3-in. peat moss, plastic or clay pots, in blocks, or directly in the finish pot.

Start the misting system as soon as the cuttings are stuck. Cycle the mist to insure the cuttings are always moist but not overwet. The first 24 hours are the most critical; if hot weather prevails, it may be necessary to mist the cuttings throughout the night; otherwise misting from sunrise to sunset is sufficient. Reduce the frequency of mist application as the cuttings root.

The last couple of days in the propagation bench should be unmisted so plants may harden off somewhat for the potting operation.

Proposed Misting Schedule

Number of days starting when cuttings inserted	Duration of misting (seconds)	Frequency (minutes)
0-3	15	every 6
3-8	10	every 12
8—until removed	5	every 18

Begin fertilization of the crop in the propagation bench. Mist-fertilizer of 2 oz potassium nitrate plus 3 oz calcium nitrate per 100 gal of water gets the plants off to a fast, healthy start. If mist-fertilizer is not used, begin fertilizing with 150 ppm N from 20-20-20, 5 to 7 days following sticking of the cuttings, or when roots are first visible. Use 10 oz in 100 gal of water.

DIRECT ROOTING IN FINISH POT

Direct sticking of unrooted cuttings in the finishing pan has become standard practice with many growers. Less labor is required; however, more expensive misting facilities required may off-set the savings in labor.

1. New cultivars and the single pinched plant are readily adapted to the method.
2. Use new pots, spaced pot to pot. Use a well-drained, well-aerated medium. Peat-lite mixes work well.
3. *Stick cuttings* directly in pre-formed holes in the moist medium. With peat-lite mixes, pre-formed holes are not needed. *Do not force cuttings* into medium. Stick all cuttings to the same depth in a pot. Cuttings should not touch pot rim.
4. **DO NOT WATER** in the cuttings, place them under mist immediately.
5. Cuttings in a given pot must be uniform in length, stem diameter, leaf number and general appearance. One of the most important factors in success of the direct stick method is that all cuttings in one pot be as uniform as possible, to insure the rate of plant development and bloom will occur at the same time.
6. Use automatic mist, as described for propagation.

Good mist coverage is important, to insure uniform rooting and development. Make certain that pots in the outside bench rows are receiving adequate mist. Avoid overmisting.

7. Use air temperature of 72°F nights, 80°F days. Just warm air is not enough. Bottom heat is essential to keep the root medium at 72-75°F. Check by inserting a thermometer directly in the pot.
8. Medium shade of the plants is recommended. Too much light on new cultivars causes a fading of leaf color.
9. Seven days after sticking, water with a fertilizer solution of 8 oz of potassium nitrate per 100 gal of water.
10. Reduce mist gradually as cuttings start to root. Grower judgement is required here.
11. Begin a regular fertilization program about 15 days after sticking cuttings.
12. Increase pot spacing as required by the growth of the plants.
13. For additional production practices, follow the recommendations outlined in these guidelines.

General Notes: Styrofoam pots may insulate the growing medium from the bottom heat—check the temperature to be sure growing medium is at the desired temperature.

Hard plastic pots retain more moisture than clay pots. Adjust the mist accordingly.

White, hard plastic pots have been reported to adversely affect growth. Studies at Cornell showed no differences in growth or flowering of plants grown in dark green, white and crystal clear pots.

GROWING MEDIA AND FERTILIZATION

Media for poinsettias range from peat-lite mixes to modified peat-lite mixes to amended soil mixes. Regardless of your selection, the medium must be porous and well-drained, free from insects and diseases and have good nutrient holding and buffering characteristics. Soil and mixes should be steam sterilized or chemically fumigated. Do not use untreated soils.

If you prepare your own peat-lite mixes, be sure the amounts of material added are accurate. The quantity of fritted trace elements called for appears to be a very small amount. Serious crop injury has occurred when additional trace elements have been used. Likewise, *poor crop quality has been the rule when the trace elements have been left out of the mixes*. Make the mix yourself or assign a responsible employee to the job. Do not risk the loss of your crop on carelessness in the production process at this point.

If you use a commercially prepared peat-lite mix, you must fertilize the plants with a complete analysis fertilizer that supplies N-P-K throughout the entire crop as these media do not contain enough phosphorus to carry the crop to final sales. If only N and K are supplied, the bract size will be less than that found on plants fertilized with N-P-K.

(continued on page 6)

The 1983 Poinsettia Crop

(continued from page 5)

SOIL MIX

Fertilizer materials for 1-1-1 by volume soil, peat moss and perlite medium:

Materials	AMT/CU/YD	
	Upstate New York (neutral water)	Long Island (acid water)
Dolomitic limestone	5 lbs	8-10 lbs
20% superphosphate	8 lbs	8 lbs
OR USE		
Treble superphosphate	4 lbs	4 lbs
Potassium nitrate	½ lb	½ lb
Chelated iron (Sequestrene 330)	2 tbsp level	2 tbsp level
Trace elements		
USE—ESMIGRAN	5 lbs	5 lbs
OR USE—Perk	5 lbs	5 lbs

PEAT-LITE MIX

Peat-lite mix for poinsettias, 1 cu. yd.

Materials	Upstate New York		Long Island
Shredded sphagnum peat moss	13 bu ^a	13 bu	
Horticultural vermiculite (#2 preferred; #3 is OK)	13 bu	13 bu	
Dolomitic limestone	5 lb	8-12 lb	
20% superphosphate	8 lb	8 lb	
OR USE			
Treble superphosphate	4 lb	4 lb	
Potassium nitrate			
OR calcium nitrate	1 lb	1 lb	
Chelated iron (Sequestrene 330)	2 tbsp level	2 tbsp level	
Trace elements			
USE—ESMIGRAN	5 lbs	5 lbs	
OR USE—Perk	5 lbs	5 lbs	
Aqua-Gro or Surfside or similar liquid wetting ^b agent	3 fl oz ^c	3 fl oz	
OR			
Aqua-Gro granular	1 lb	1 lb	

^aOne cu yd equals 22 bu; the 4 extra bu are to make up for shrinkage in mixing.

^bFor other wetting agents, see Cornell Information Bulletin #43, Peat-Lite Mixes.

^c3 fl oz=90 ml.

Be sure mix preparation is done on clean surfaces. Proper mixing eliminates many cultural problems due to poor distribution of ingredients.

Always fill containers with enough medium to compensate for settling upon watering. Allow enough reservoir for water to insure thorough wetting of the medium as well as to provide some excess water for leaching purposes.

Ann Reilly Leaves Executive Secretary And Editor Positions



ANN REILLY

Ann Reilly relinquished her responsibilities as Executive Secretary and Editor for the New York State Flower Industries, Inc. effective June 30, 1983. Ann plans to use the time formerly devoted to NYSFI activities to increased involvement in the turfgrass and nursery industries, to increase the time spent writing for trade magazines and to build her public relations and photography activities.

The Board of Directors, at their June meeting, expressed their appreciation to Ann for her excellent service to the organization.

Ann joined NYSFI, Inc. in September 1979. During her tenure, the State's florist organization has developed numerous public relations and product promotion thrusts. The *NYSFI Bulletin* has grown to an eight-page publication and bears the clear stamp of Ann's journalistic talents. Ann has served the Officers, Board of Directors, and members of our organization extremely well. We extend all best wishes to Ann as she moves on to other horticultural and journalistic efforts.

A Search Committee comprised of Kermit Huttar, Chairperson, Port Byron; Gary Rockwell, Balston Spa; and William Matthes, Syracuse, are hard at work planning for Ann's successor.

In the meantime, Professor Carl F. Gortzig of the Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture at Cornell University, has agreed to serve as Interim Editor of the *Bulletin*.

Please address any business or non-Bulletin matters to me at White Deer Court, Box 376, Huntington, New York 11743.

Lib Martelli
President, NYSFI Inc.