

Standard Grades

Cites Uniform Grading System for Cut Flowers as an Overdue Aid to Efficient Marketing Practices

By HAROLD B. BROOKINS

The following dissertation on the development of uniform standards for florists' cut flower crops was presented by Harold Brookins at the fifth national conference on standards sponsored by the American Standards Association at its 36th annual meeting held in November at New York. Mr. Brookins is chairman of the grading committee of the New York State Flower Growers.

The subject of standard grades is not new in floriculture, but, until recently, it has been a subject for conversation and controversy rather than for analysis and action.

Much of the recent interest in standard grades for florists' crops stems from the research done by Dr. Kenneth Post, of Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. His work established a relationship between the weight of the individual flower and the intangibles in commercial floriculture called quality.

Under Dr. Post's leadership, the New York State Flower Growers drew up a set of grading standards for such florists' crops as carnations, snapdragons, chrysanthemums, pompons, stocks and iris. These standards made use of the weight of the individual stem and included such other measurable qualities as the length of the stem, the floret count and the flower diameter, where applicable.

Response was immediate and spontaneous. A considerable number of growers, not only in New York state but elsewhere, embarked upon a program of grading by the CSW standards, as it was called. However, it soon became apparent that many growers had launched the program without adequate preparation; they were quickly discouraged and reverted to their old practices. The usual excuse was that the system was too complicated for the average grower.

Special Committee

However, such interest was generated in standard grades that the Society of American Florists in 1950 appointed a special committee on grading standards. This committee was made a constitutional standing committee of the society in 1951.

The committee has endeavored to make a frank impersonal review of the status of standard grades. It early recognized the difficulty of teaching growers to think objectively about the program. Flower growers generally favored any grading system that gave high rating to their own current production. This has resulted

in each grower's production being marketed under his own individual and widely varying standards. Every market has growers whose preferred position results from the excellence of their individual grading. This individual grading, regardless of its excellence, lacks the continuity and interchangeability which could be achieved by the general use of uniform standard grades.

Continued effort has crystallized some of the basic concepts of grading cut flowers. The primary purpose of uniform standard grades is to make the merchandise more readily salable, thereby assuring the purchaser that the flower within any unit of sale should be completely useful for the intended purpose. Many of the qualities of flowers are easily measurable. Uniform standard grades contribute to this purpose by establishing grade limits for the individual flowers.

Statement of Objective

As a basis for orderly development, the S. A. F. committee adopted a statement of objective, which is as follows: (1) To devise and promote a system of grading for cut flowers which shall adequately classify the material commonly dealt with in the florists' trade; (2) to choose a method for the evaluation of flower qualities which is positive, based upon universally accepted scales of measurement—ounces, inches, numbers—can be reduced to writing and will remain inflexible from season to season and from beginning to end of crop; (3) to choose a nomenclature which shall not depreciate the merchandise in the eyes of the consumer; (4) to establish grade limits for the various cut flower crops; (5) to offer such a system to the trade for voluntary acceptance, with the assurance that hope of greater profit will be the only pressure for its use, and (6) to establish a continuing re-examination of the use of standard grades to reflect broader experience and changes in the character of the material offered by the producer or desired by the consumer.

Following the pattern set forth in the statement of objective, the following points have been established: (1) For most florists' crops four standard grades will adequately classify the material commonly dealt with in the florists' trade. (2) For many florists' crops, weight of the individual flower correlates closely with characteristics recognized as quality in flowers. Weight of the individual flowers, coupled with length of stem and, in

some cases, number of open florets (snapdragons) and flower diameter (chrysanthemums) serve to sort flowers accurately into a series of qualities or grades. (3) The grade names adopted are special, fancy, extra, first, from high to low in that order.

The Society of American Florists has adopted S. A. F. standard grades for carnations, chrysanthemums, pompons, iris, snapdragons and stocks. The New York State Flower Growers have reconciled their standards with those promoted by the Society of American Florists, so that they are now identical.

It is apparent that many growers have confused the principle of uniform standard grades with the mechanics of grading. They say that grading to meticulous standards is desirable but is costly and will add to the price of the product. Those persons who have had experience do not accept this premise. They find, in the use of uniform standards, that personnel can grade to uniform standards more easily and faster than under systems in which individual decisions must be made without standards.

The advantages and economies to the producers and handlers of flowers graded to uniform standards are apparent to all who have become familiar with their use.

Sources of Resistance

The resistance to uniform standard grades comes from several sources, among which are the so-called average grower, who is content to go along with long working hours and meager livelihood and to whom changing methods offer no challenge; the dishonest grower, who wants to grade the culls with the perfect flowers when the market is tight in the hope that the buyer will overlook the irregularities because of his need for stock; the grower to whom pride is more important than profit, who wants a system which will always rate the kind of material he is currently growing as top quality; the dishonest wholesaler, who fears that uniform grades may help to expose his irregular practices; the honest but unprogressive wholesaler, who has had no experience and is content to operate in the confusion of present practices, and many other individuals from all branches of the trade, who, from extreme conservatism and because of lack of experience with standard-graded material, resist all change.

In addition to the inertia which resists change everywhere, and, especially in small units of agriculture, the greatest single deterrent to the establishment of cut flower standard grades has been the attitude of wholesalers.

In many cases the influence of wholesale commission florists (the growers' sales agents) has ranged from moderate lip service to aggressive and hostile opposition. In some market areas, wholesalers have instructed the growers not to attend

(Continued on page 52.)

12 blooms, said to be sign work, with min-angements be demon- with the f some of i. ne college school, J. C. also the vided ma- L. C. K. bery t entered shop the pretended to be a o an ac- Gazette. rictor of was out enrietta, woman o a rest with a in quiet. door of her way ut \$200 register. hat the o years tore. Brookins 155 200 the as the lly ass gh he

Get a
FREE
Sample of



Organic Compost

**SEE HOW
PROFITS
GROW
BIGGER!**



The new beauty Fertliffe gives to all your plants will bring satisfied customers back again and again! As a Fertliffe dealer, you have an excellent source of bench and potting soil, as well as a profitable retail item. Use Fertliffe in your greenhouse . . . build plus business selling 5-lb. and 50-lb. bags to your customers when they buy potted plants, rose bushes, shrubs, and evergreens. Fertliffe is nature's own fertilizer made clean and free of offensive odor. Scientifically composted from livestock manure collected at the Chicago Stock Yards, it supplies humus and natural plant food elements for rich mellow soil for benches, flats or potting. Fertliffe is free from offensive odors or weeds, will not burn. Write today on your letterhead for free sample!

**CHICAGO STOCK YARDS COMPOST CO.
UNION STOCK YARDS, CHICAGO 9, ILL.**

Containers for single specimen blooms will be furnished by the committee. All blooms entered for competition must be of show quality and will be displayed alphabetically by variety. Nomenclature of the American Camellia Society will be followed. Blooms grown under glass must be so labeled and will be judged separately.

Harry Bullard, of Harry Bullard Florist, spoke on the care of house plants to members of Garden Gate Club on January 10.

Ralph Pinkus, of Northaven Gardens, talked to Merrilee Lane Garden Club January 12 on "Planting and Care of Shrubs" and to the Lake Highlands Garden Club on January 11 on "Plantings Around a Patio." R. M.

STANDARD GRADES
(Concluded from page 23.)

meetings at which the program of grading standards was to be discussed. Some wholesalers, in markets where averaging is an accepted evil, have, in their returns to growers, penalized those who attempted to improve their product by the use of uniform grading standards.

Other wholesalers, whose reports of sales are presumably accurate, evidence their negative attitude by arbitrarily pricing the lower grades below the average. They make little attempt to test their market for the real value of the merchandise.

Those who believe in uniform standards for cut flowers recognize that it is not a short term program. It involves changes in the basic thinking of the individuals in an entire industry.

However, there is now a small but steady increase in the number of growers grading to S. A. F. standards. Those growers who have persisted in their grading efforts long enough to gain experience report satisfaction and improvement in their marketing programs.

PUGET SOUND GROWERS
(Continued from page 27.)

he had to work for 18 months to have his property zoned under business instead of residential classification, advised the assembled group to appoint a committee to study the situation and said that the group should act on the problem as a body.

After some discussion; a committee was appointed. It consists of "Bud" Christensen as chairman, with the other members being Walter Scott, Ted Swanson and Kelly Nishitani.

It was decided to ask the six members of the lily committee to make a count of lilies in greenhouses in the area. Albert Steuber, of Steuber Wholesale Floral Co., Snohomish, is chairman of this committee. Other members are Henry Mollgaard; Mrs. Snyo Kumasaki, of Green Lake Gardens; Tosh Mano, of Earlington Greenhouses; Yosh Ono, of Ono Greenhouses, and Tora Araki, of South

CEMETERY BASKETS



2 piece, 18"
\$3.75



2-piece, 16"
\$3.95

Low type, 18"
\$2.50

Low type, 16"
\$2.70

The Most Durable Cemetery Basket

Formerly Olson Basket Co.
MADSON BASKET CO
300 Brown St. NORWAY, N.

MERRILL MFG. CO.
Specializing in Ribbons

Please write now for our new sales catalog. It contains a complete line of all staple and novelty ribbons—novelty, special events—plus samples of window display materials. It's sent free postage prepaid.

Save 10% on all your ribbon orders buying direct from this sample book. Orders are sent postage prepaid to you.

1313 W. Randolph St.
NEW PHONE: HAYmarket 1-377

IMPORTANT TO READ

Due to the great demand for our series of all available books have been sent. A set of books is on its way to florists. Write us and as yet have not received. We also wish to thank those who have ordered our books and have returned them. We thank you for everything. Write to write in for our sample books. It's

INDIANAPOLIS REED COMPANY, INC.
2217 Massachusetts Avenue
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA

Manufacturers of floral baskets and wire designs
wholesalers of florists' supplies.

Park Greenhouses. The committee will make the count, then meet with heads of the wholesale houses. Be prepared to give both the and the suggested prices at the meeting of Growers of Puget Sound on February 2.

Moving pictures taken by Kawachi, of Floralcrest Greenhouses of the short course tour, on January 4, were shown to the group. A version had been shown over TV on December 10.

Members of the group will meet for flower and foliage to help decorate the Winthrop meeting rooms for the wintering of the Washington State Florists' Association, to be held in Tacoma January 17 and 18.

Members of the growers' board will meet shortly to plan short course programs. Mr.