SUMMER ANNUALS—CUT YOUR OWN

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Growers with land adjoining their greenhouse range may want to consider field grown cut-your-own flowers. I stress adjoining because, as in any pick-your-own operation, the pickers must be monitored to prevent pilferage and vandalism. A convenient pay station should be established to collect their money. Select, if possible, a well-drained site which will enable customers to pick during wet periods. The next important step is to get a complete soil test of the field to be planted. This is a must.

By contrast, water should be available for irrigation to insure uniform rapid growth. Most annuals require an inch of water per week.

When growing a cut flower crop, timing is essential. The major seed catalogs offer good guides in this matter. Obviously early summer (before people have bloom in their own yards), and late fall should prove the most profitable. Plants programmed for early cut should be started in the greenhouse. One method of

References


getting a jump in the field is to use poly
tents—the short row type used by some vege-
table growers. Another early frost protection
method is to cut reinforcing concrete mats and
form mini-quonsets which are covered with poly.
Mid and late season plantings may be direct
seeded, but this will require a good irrigation
system during the critical germination period.
A safer method is to start plants in the green-
house and set out larger established plants.

Weed control must be incorporated into a
pick-your-own operation to reduce labor costs.
CAUTION—read the label carefully and make sure
that the herbicide is cleared for the crops.
Mulches could also be used to control weeds.
Plastic film or organic mulches such as leaves,
straw, clean hay, or wood products are possible
materials.

Disease and insect free cut flowers can only
be produced with a regular preventive spray pro-
gram. A multipurpose spray of Kelthane, Sevin
and Captan should control the more common pro-
blems. Follow label directions and precautions
exactly!

The taller growing annuals such as Snapdragon,
Calendula, Centaurea, Coreopsis, Salpiglossis, and
Scabiosa need support. Three foot stakes about
1 1/2-2 inches wide, driven into the center of the
row, every 10-15 feet should be ample. A pliable
18 to 20 gauge wire attached to each side of the
stakes at 18-24 inches may provide sufficient
support. This wire support keeps the stems
straight, flower heads out of the mud, and
reduces damage from wind, rain or overhead
irrigation.

Planting successive blocks of flowers will
assist in customer control which is essential in
any pick-your-own operation. Those areas not
ready for picking are easier to rope off.

seed firms should be considered. Days to
germinate vary from 5 to 125 and days to
transplant 12 to 133.

Fertilization of seedlings and transplants
is suggested at a medium rate--150 ppm of

Transplanted seedlings should be maintained
in a 65°F plus greenhouse with shading provided
as appropriate for the season.

Foliage plant seeds currently offered in
the catalogs include:

Aglaonema commutatum or modestum
Aloe variegata
Arabica nana
Arabica humulis
Aralia elegantissima
Aralia sieboldii
Araucaria excelsa (Norfolk Pine)
Ardisia crenulata
Asparagus cultivare
Beaucarnea recurvata (Nolina)
Beaucarnea guatemalenses
Chamaedorea elegans
Coffea arabica
Cordyline australis
Corynocarpus laevigata
Croton
Cupressus sempervirens
Cyperus alternifolius
Draceana draco
Ficus benjamin
Grevellia robusta
Harpephyllum caffrum
Hypoestes
Jacaranda mimosaefolia
Leca coccinea
FOLIAGE PLANTS FROM SEED

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Seed propagation of foliage plants may provide a new profitable crop for your greenhouse. Transportation costs for shipping southern grown foliage continue to rise and reduce the profit margin. Occasionally, plant material received is infested with disease and insect pests. This can be significantly reduced or eliminated with seed culture.

The major seed companies do have a portion of their catalog devoted to foliage plant seed. Many of these companies also provide cultural information for germinating and handling foliage plant seed.

Various media have been successfully used to germinate foliage plant seed such as: 1) peat moss, vermiculite; 2) sphagnum peat; 3) sphagnum peat moss, horticultural grade perlite; and 4) commercial peat-lite mixes. The pH of the medium does not appear to significantly affect percent of germination in most genera.

Planting depth of seed should be gauged by the size of the seed--too deep a planting delays germination. Again, check company cultural sheets for current suggestions.

Medium temperature appears to be the most critical factor regulating germination. Foliage plant seeds have been successfully germinated at medium temperatures of 70°, 80°, and 83-91°F. Generally speaking the higher temperatures resulted in a more rapid rate of germination. Here economics and cultural sheets from the

Some annuals suggested as cut flowers are:

Amaranthus
Antirrhinum
Aster
Batchelor Buttons
Browallia
Calendula
Callistephus
Centaurea
Clarkia
Coreopsis
Delphinium
Eschscholzia California
Feverfew
Gaillardia
Helianthus annus (dwarf form)

Our present generation is interested in dried flower arrangements. A separate area for everlasting flowers should be planted. Annuals which may be dried for everlasting arrangements include:

Acroclinium
Baby’s Breath
Celosia
Cockscomb
Gomphrena
Gomphrena
Gypsophila

One final note of caution. Try this on a small scale first. See if it can provide some cash flow during the normal greenhouse summer slump.