

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

getting a jump in the field is to use poly tents--the short row type used by some vegetable growers. Another early frost protection method is to cut reinforcing concrete mats and form mini-quinsets 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 greenhouse 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 program. A multipurpose spray of Kelthane, Sevin and Captan should control the more common problems. 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.

Some annuals suggested as cut flowers are:

<i>Amaranthus</i>	<i>Larkspur</i>
<i>Antirrhinum</i>	<i>Lupinus</i>
<i>Aster</i>	<i>Marigold</i>
<i>Batchelor Buttnoms</i>	<i>Matricaria</i>
<i>Browallia</i>	<i>Mathiola</i>
<i>Calendula</i>	<i>Mignonette</i>
<i>Callistephus</i>	<i>Nicotiana</i>
<i>Centaurea</i>	<i>Phlox Drummondi</i>
<i>Clarkia</i>	<i>Reseda dorata</i>
<i>Coreopsis</i>	<i>Salpiglossis</i>
<i>Delphinium</i>	<i>Scabiosa</i>
<i>Eschscholzia California</i>	<i>Snapdragon</i>
<i>Feverfew</i>	<i>Stock</i>
<i>Gaillardia</i>	<i>Tagetes</i>
<i>Helianthus annus</i>	<i>Zinnia</i>
(<i>dwarf form</i>)	

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:

<i>Acroclinium</i>	<i>Helichrysum</i>
<i>Baby's Breath</i>	<i>Limonium sinuatum</i>
<i>Celosia</i>	<i>Limonium suworowi</i>
<i>Cockscomb</i>	<i>Ornamental grasses</i>
<i>Gomphrena</i>	<i>Statice</i>
<i>Gypsophila</i>	<i>Straw flower</i>

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.