The Importance of Timing Carnations for the Fall Market

Leland T. Kintzele[1]

It is important - very important - to have adequate carnations for the fall market, but let's explore this sales problem in a bit more depth. Let's go back to the beginning of the summer when carnations on the Denver Market, and most other markets, are relatively abundant. This is the period immediately following Memorial Day, or sometimes before, when carnation quality is normally excellent, and when there is a substantial percentage of the best grades available. Because of the abundance and because the summer market has lots of competition from outdoor merchandise produced in other areas, and because business normally suffers a slowdown in summer; prices are also attractive. This is the picture then in early summer, as it pertains to carnations. Top quality, abundance, and attractive prices.

The customer is urged to keep his order in during this period of slow business because quality is tops and prices are comparatively low. In many instances, the customer who buys lesser grades during the regular season is urged to change to better grades because the price for that better grade is perhaps as low, or lower than the price he paid for lesser grades just a week or two before. As summer progresses, the percentage of top grades normally declines, but there is still a great abundance of carnations because long days and summer temperatures accelerate the maturity of carnations.

When we reach late August and early September production traditionally takes a significant dip. The percentage of Fancy Carnations then reaches its lowest point of the season and the real sales headaches begin. In some instances, it's impossible to fill standing order commitments. In many, too many instances, the wholesale house must downgrade orders for Fancy Carnations - orders, mind you, that have either been developed for this prime grade by the attractive listings of the summer season, or which have been a part of a regular customer's recurring order for many months.

Standing Orders

Let's examine what happens. A customer whose business has been developed suddenly finds out we cannot either deliver the quantity he wants or the grade he wants - and he objects. Frequently that objection is emphasized with a cancellation notice. The wholesale salesman must then - either by phone, or in the field, or both - call on, or talk to this customer and attempt to assuage his irritation with our failure to supply the merchandise we've sold him. He may take his business to a competitive market. What has happened? We've lost a good customer to a competitor; we have lost established recurring business; we've used up a salesman's time trying to recapture an account - time which could have been used to much better advantage soliciting new business. And in too many instances, we have not only lost that customer in September, we may have lost him for the balance of the season.

The recurring regular order is the least costly - or conversely - the most profitable order we have. Once it has been booked - and presuming it is filled satisfactorily, week in and week out with good quality merchandise - the grades, quantities, and colors which have been ordered - then it is the most trouble free order we have. If it is not interrupted and it recurs week in and week out, then that order - or many of them - insure the sustained marketing of your carnations throughout the year.

The early Fall Market is a most critical one for all Colorado Carnation Growers. This is the time of the year when retail florists generally start a new season. The summer is behind them, the Labor Day Holiday is past, the kids are in school, and the new season starts. The impression you make on a customer in the early fall market - if it is a good one - may well last through the season. If it does, then the sales cost of that order is minimal; but most important to you, the flowers you produce in November, December, January, February, and on through the year, are pre-sold for the balance of the season.

It is simply a matter of profits, gentlemen, and that is what you are in business for - or should be. AND this is a sales problem that can't be solved at the distribution level. The best salesman in the world has never yet developed a satisfactory answer for his company's failure to deliver the product, the quality, the grade he promised to deliver. This is a problem which must be solved in the greenhouse. It will not go away.

Even though I have been away from the greenhouse for more than 10 years, I'm sure that with the know-how the producer has today about timing, he can solve this problem. Surely some of those summer flowers which occur in greater abundance than the market can absorb profitably can be moved into the fall market. It will be dollars in your pocket, gentlemen, dollars which insure your investment; but just as importantly, the delivery of quality carnations in adequate quantities in the Fall Market is the best insurance you have for maintaining and expanding the market for your carnations.

Summarizing - what I have tried to say is this - some of the blooms you save for later flowering when you cut "high" in the Fall - and thus deprive the market of the Fancy Carnations needed at that time - may not be sold the following Spring because of your failure to deliver Fancies for Fall market requirements.

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[1]Mr. Kintzele is Sales Manager for Denver Wholesale Florist Company. This is a talk presented in a panel on sales problems at the 1966 Colorado Carnation Conference.

From SAF's Labor Relations Counsel

The Federal Wage-Hour Law is one of the most complicated laws affecting business. The following will explain, in general terms, how the law applies to the floriculture industry.

GROWERS

Prior to February 1, 1967, employees engaged in agriculture were exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the law. Effective February 1, 1967, agricultural employees are subject to the minimum wage if the employer used as many as 500 man-days of farm labor during any calendar quarter of the preceding calendar year. A man-day is a day on which an employee works one hour or more. Covered agricultural employees must be paid a minimum wage of $1.00 per hour effective February 1, 1967 - $1.15 per hour effective February 1, 1968 - and $1.30 per hour effective February 1, 1969. No overtime is required.

If an agricultural worker performs any covered work which is not agricultural he is subject to the full minimum wage of $1.40 on February 1, 1967, with time and a half the employee's regular rate for hours worked in excess of 40 per week.

For example, if any employer is engaged in growing agricultural or horticultural commodities and purchases or receives any finished commodities not grown by him, he will lose the agricultural exemption for an employee who performs any work on those commodities not grown by him. There is no tolerance.

SPECIAL - If a farmer uses workers supplied by a contract crew leader such workers count toward the 500-man-days. The record keeping regulations provide that the farmer must maintain the time and pay records of such workers whether or not he pays them directly. It is expected that the Administrator will also look to the farmer for compliance with respect to such contract crew workers.

If an employee is subject to overtime he must receive not less than time and one half his regular rate of pay. This means the rate at which he is actually employed. If he is paid $2.00 an hour he must receive at least $3.00 for overtime. If he is paid on a salary basis he must be paid overtime on the actual hourly rate. If his average rate, based on his salary, is $2.50 he must receive $3.75 for overtime.

SAF's Wage Hour Consultant will answer any questions you may have. He is also available to visit your establishment, on a fee basis, analyze the operation and make proper recommendations.

KENNETH R. MOREFIELD

Carnation Nutrition

Puustjarvi, Viljo. 1962. On the strength of the carnation stem. Advancing Frontiers of Plant Sci. 1:157-168. Potassium not generally high in stiff stems. The K ion is almost completely dissolved in cell sap, and effectively raises the osmotic pressure in the cell sap. Osmotic pressure in weak stems is

greater than in corresponding stiff stems. Excess nitrogen also increases the water content of the cell, causes weak stems. (Dr. Puustjarvi works at the University of Helsinki, Finland.) - J. Green.

Some Aids in Controlling Drip in Plastic Houses

1. Remove some of the closure strips used to block corrugations, preferably at the ridge. Most plastic houses are much tighter than glass houses. The tighter the house the more moisture condensation on the cover.

2. Stripe the underside of the roof over the two or three walks nearest the eaves with a thin ridge of quick-drying acrylic resin. This will cause a small obstruction that will take the drip off in the walks. Little or no drip occurs in the middle third of an even span house according to Goldsberry's measurements in rose houses in 1964-65.

3. Air movement inside the greenhouse by circulation fans and tubes is good practice in temperature control and helps most to reduce condensation. Other work along this line will be done this coming year at CSU. - WDH

Water Stress and Plant Temperature

Weigand, C. L. and L. N. Namken. 1966. Influences of plant moisture stress, solar radiation, and air temperature on cotton leaf temperature. Agronomy Journal 58:582-586. Measurements of plant stress, solar radiation, leaf and air temperature were made in the field on cotton. The lower the stress to which the plants were subjected (more frequent irrigations) the more variable the plant temperature. This variability was due to higher and more variable water loss from the plants in the wet treatments. The higher the water loss (transpiration), the lower the leaf temperature. An increase in solar radiation of about 1 gm-cal/cm^2 could result in a 16 to 18°F rise in temperature unless the transpiration rate also increased to afford a greater degree of cooling. Increasing the stress, by withholding water resulted in a 7°F rise in temperature. - J. Hanan.