

## Two and a Quarters are Out

You waste your time if you transplant to 2 1/4's no matter what the crop might be. These small pots are usually handled as individuals, one at a time, while potting. They are difficult to keep upright and plant into after filling.

Pots, 2 1/4 inch, contain a small amount of soil which dries rapidly. It is nearly impossible to keep them moist enough, and plants become dwarfed and hard.

The young plants must be transferred from the small pots shortly after they are planted into them making the additional job of transplanting to the next size, come very soon. The tops of the plants also crowd in a short time making a spindly undesirable growth.

### Bands a Partial Substitute

Two inch plant bands actually take less room, contain as much soil, set readily, are easy to transplant to and do not dry as rapidly as pots. Young plants can stay in them only a short time before the tops crowd and the plants spindle.

Planting in flats directly gives the same advantages over pots as do plant bands. The one disadvantage compared with bands is the greater difficulty in transplanting and the greater setback they receive.

### Don't Transplant

Every transplanting you give sets the plant back and reduces quality. Plant seeds or rooted cuttings directly to the flowering position whenever possible and practical. This has been shown especially desirable in direct seeding of peas, stocks, calendulas, larkspur, and many other annuals. Direct planting of rooted cuttings of chrysanthemums and direct planting of rose (dormant) plants or rooted cuttings has proven superior to a longer more labor consuming method of potting.

Direct planting enables you to better time your crop. It reduces the growing period from seed to bloom or cutting to bloom. This is best illustrated with chrysanthemums which, by the old method of growing, required propagation in March or earlier for normal season bloom. Now by direct planting of rooted cuttings, the same normal season crop is planted as rooted cuttings fourteen weeks before it is to flower.

Cyclamen seeds spaced 1 1/2 inches apart at planting time or individual seeds planted in 2 inch bands save the transplanting from the seed bed until the seedlings are large enough to plant directly in three or four inch pots or better transplant to a bench to grow until they are ready to plant in the final sized pot. Yes, it takes more seed flats and more room at the start, but this is at the time of year when you have the room and you would have to give them this spacing soon after the seeds germinate, if they were not handled in this manner.

Kalanchoes are best transplanted from the seed pan to flats, then direct to the flowering pot.

Small seedlings such as snapdragons can be planted direct to the flowering location from the seed pan. The first watering must be carefully done or by sub-irrigation to avoid washing the seedlings. This method of handling is especially desirable for the close spacing - no pinch growing.

If you still believe you aren't ready to discard the two-and-a-quarter's, you had better rig up some bench space for automatic or semi-automatic watering to save time in watering and keep the soil moist for the young plants.

All potted plants are easily handled and kept in better growing conditions by automatic watering, by semi-constant, or constant level watering. If you don't want to go the whole way and put in water-tight benches, you can save a lot of work in watering by semi-constant level watering.

### Semi-constant Level Watering

Lay asphalt roofing paper in the bottom of the bench. If possible, let it slide up the side of the bench two inches. Don't worry about waterproofing the bench. You can cement the joints if a lap is necessary. Place two inches of propagating sand on the asphalt paper and your pots on this. The sand acts as a reservoir for water. You won't have to water the plants, but water the sand. If you skip every other row, the plants will get water from the sand.

If your bench slopes from one end, you can water it all by putting the water on the high end and letting it run through the bench. Soaking the sand every morning will give you nearly the same result as constant level watering.

Discard the gravel or cinders. They are good drainage but make you water each plant separately and just enough. They make watering potted plants an art. Must we keep our business an art or are we old enough to want to do things the easy way? The cool water over the finger in the hot summer does feel good, I must say.

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Your Editor,

*Kenneth Post*