Weight Grading of Cut Flowers

Dr. Kenneth Post
Department of Floriculture and Ornamental Horticulture
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

Quality in cut flowers is best expressed by weight. The weight of an individual stem accounts for the size and length of stem and the size of the flower display on the stem. To describe quality in any other manner than by weight requires a lengthy wording which cannot be understood and followed by one other than the person writing it. Weight is a definite figure which can be followed by any grower.

Weight cannot take into account color, crooked stems, old or misshapen flowers. These poor flowers are easily eliminated from the graded stock by the sorter.

Weight grading also permits the use of mechanical graders. An adaptation of the old apple grader or egg grader could easily be made to flower grading. In some areas this would readily lend itself to centralized grading.

Standard grades in flowers will help the entire industry. The retailer will know exactly what he is to receive when he orders from the wholesaler. He can purchase definite grades best fitted to the job for which it is used. He can price grades to his customers.

The wholesaler will be better able to report accurately to the grower. He can sell to the retailer the exact kind of merchandise the retailer desires for a certain job. He can depend more on the telephone. He can explain his returns to the grower.

The grower will learn what quality his markets demand and can grow for those markets. He will then know how his product stands with respect to other growers in the market. He will be able to talk quality with the wholesaler.

The grower can label each pack with a grade label and will not be afraid to label the poorer grades for fear his customers will say he produces "junk". He will be known in the market for his good grading and his grade label will mean something to the retailer.

The experiment stations could better evaluate their results in terms of quality. With present knowledge they could help the grower to produce the largest possible quantity of the quality of product his market demands.

The market reporter could give more accurate prices than is now possible. California prices of pompons could be compared to those of New York.

The consumer can purchase the grade desired for the occasion. The reason for retail price differences could be easily explained. Uniformity in quality would be available for packaging.

Eliminate "clucks"

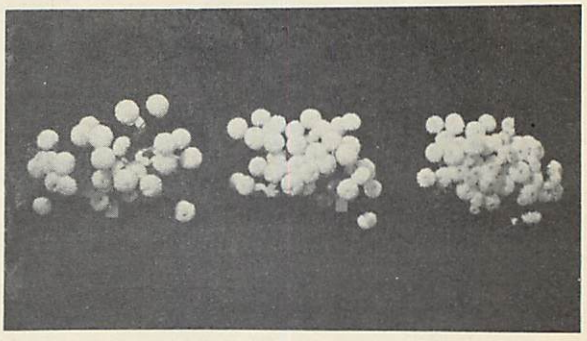
At present, nearly every bunch of carnations, roses, chrysanthemums, snapdragons, stocks and other cut flowers contain one or more "clucks". These are readily thrown out and into a lower grade by weight grading. Poor flowers are included with the good ones now because the grower desires to dispose of them and he has no other place to put them. Perhaps they are the proper stem length, but the stem is weak or the flower small. Both of these factors help to reduce weight.

Perhaps some growers think they are disposing of the poor quality stock at the price of the good. The retailer spots the poor flowers in the bunches and the price is based on the poorest flowers in the bunch -- not the best ones. The grower is selling his good stock at the price of the poor. He needs a sufficient number of grades to obtain uniformity within the unit of pack. Second quality packed together looks much better than when it is contrasted with first quality by being packed with it.

Labor involved

If the grading were on a mechanical basis, much of the labor could be eliminated. When grading is by hand it is doubtful if any flower would require more labor for grading than is now given to placing the poor with the good in such a way it will not be seen.

Weighing each flower is not necessary. A few can be weighed to set up the grades. It will be necessary to check only occasionally after a grader has become acquainted with the standards.



4's 7's 17's

Lakme

In this variety the 4's have flowers along the stem making an irregular bunch. 7's and 14's have fewer flowers per stem but they are all near the end. Average of each bunch is near 10 ounces.