

The Northwest Grower



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By Frank Batson

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World wide, per capita flower usage, 1990 (Stats story #1)

BY FRANK BATSON — Recent statistics from the Holland Flower Bureau indicate that the Scandinavian countries spend more on flowers than any other place in the world.

Every man, woman and child in Norway, which leads the world, spends the equivalent of \$154 each on cut flowers or potted plants for everyday usage in their homes, offices and places of employment, or as gifts. Folks in Sweden, which is in third place, spends \$126, beat only by the Swiss who purchase \$143 worth each year.

The ECC (European Common Community) has nine member-nations out of the top 15, for the amount of money spent each year on flowers. Japan and the U.S. were the only two non-Europeans in the top 15, at \$53 and \$48 respectively. But it must be noted that the figure for Japan indicates cut flower usage only, thus they are spending more on cuts than we in the U.S. do on both cuts and pot combined. The U.K and Spain were at the bottom of this list at \$32 and \$22 each.

The big question that comes out of all this is, of course . . . what can we do to increase the annual usage of flowers here in this country? If we could raise this amount to only ONE-HALF that of the Norwegians, every grower and retailer alike would be wearing big smiles on their faces as they pushed their wheelbarrows to the bank!!!

Now . . . as long as we are on a statistical kick, I'll throw in the following to perhaps help explain why many European countries have such a high rate of

flower consumption. The 1990 World Competitiveness Report, compiled by two business organizations based in Switzerland, gives the highest hourly wages paid for common labor in the following five countries: Norway \$18.92 per hour, Switzerland 18.08, Germany 18.03, Sweden 16.82 and The Netherlands 16.29 . . . And you thought you were paying high wages didn't you???

In dramatic contrast to this, the five lowest paid hourly wages were Turkey 0.41, India 0.42, Hungary 1.22, Brazil 1.50 and Mexico at 1.57.

It is interesting to note that the Dutch, perhaps the largest producers of flowers in the world and with a rather high hourly wage, came in at only \$74 per capita of consumption (eighth place in the above scale), just half of what their Northern neighbor Norway spends. Either the old cliché about how tightly the Dutch hold on to a gilder is true . . . or perhaps with the abundance of local, fresh grown product so readily available, the price they must pay is much lower? And than too . . . with so many of the citizens engaged in flower production, how much of the cull material ends up on the home table of the employees? Thus, while their consumption may still be high, the amount paid out for it may be low, and would not be reflected on the rating scale.

No matter . . . the question still remains, if the European find it so enjoyable to use flowers in their everyday lives . . . why in hell can't we???

Boston 9/1