Bedding plants

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Bedding plants

- “Color”
- Annuals, perennials, vegetable and herb transplants
- Products can range from cell packs to huge mixed hanging baskets
Products

- Hanging baskets
  - Various diameters: 8” – 14”
- Container or color bowls
- Window boxes
- Seasonal combinations
- Larger sizes: 4”, 5”, quarts, gallons
  - Landscapers
  - Later in the season
Products

- Flats
  - 11” x 21” (except for slimline)
  - Flats are composed of packs
  - Packs are units of cells
  - Varying number of units and cells per unit
  - Numerical designations
    - 806 flat = 8 packs with 6 cells each
    - 1801 flat = 18 packs (individual cells) (3.5”-4” pot)
  - Flats (also called inserts) go into a tray (also called flats) for support
Value added
Species

- Often dramatic shifts in species popularity and relative market value
  - Ex: Violas are overtaking pansies
- Geographic region
  - Ex: Violas/Pansies much more important in the Southeast
- Vegetative versus seed-grown of same item
Species

- Bedding plants aren’t all flowering annuals…
  - Herbs
  - Vegetable transplants
  - Groundcovers

- Perennials included (statistically) if category is “bedding and landscape”
  - More than 300 species grown, but 70 species = 90% of the value
Markets

- Various markets, each with implications for the producer...

- Landscapers
  - Larger containers, not as weather sensitive as other markets

- Retail garden center
  - Smaller scale of product
  - More knowledgeable clientele (usually)
  - Emphasis on quality and diversity of product line
  - Price sensitive for “known” products; not as sensitive for novel products
Markets

- Mass merchandisers (home centers) and smaller chain stores (grocery or hardware)
  - Large quantities required to even enter this market
  - Demands bar coding and specific packaging
  - Often requires on-site maintenance by grower rep
Store vs. Grower Brands
26 - 7 x 11" PW Series Specific Bench Cards
2 - 7 x 11" PW Plant Foods Bench Cards
2 - 7 x 11" PW/PS Blank Pricing Bench Cards
8 - 7 x 11" PW Recipe Bench Cards
1 - 7 x 11" PW Potting Soil Bench Card
13 - 7 x 11" PS Top-Selling Bench Cards
3 - 7 x 11" Sign Holders w/ Base

2 - Double-Sided 3' Coroplast Signs
(includes 4 zip ties for hanging)

50 - Combination Recipe Booklets

1 - Waterproof Combination Recipe Booklet Holder

2' x 8' Spring Banner
Let your customers know you sell the best with our 2' x 8' Proven Winners' spring banner. The banner calls attention to premium plants and brings more gardeners into your garden center.

- Printed on a single side
- Includes wind vents to prevent ripping
- 4 grommets in each corner for easy hanging
- Vinyl rope included

U.S. $40.00 Canada $52.00

Sunshine & Shadows Garden
You've Got It In The Bag
Suns Coleus

PW
A Better Garden Starts With A Better Plant.
Faster growing. Amazing colors. Fun and easy.
Product Mix

Product mix is crucial (but how to know what to grow???)

- Past records
- Anticipate new varieties
  - Field days and grower trials
  - AAS, regional trials, trade journals, trade shows
- Examine trends
Point of Purchase

- So you add all this new stuff and...
  - Educate your customers
    - P.O.P. Displays (retail)
    - Use, culture, final size (landscapers)
- POP and label materials provided by brands
  - Proven Winners
  - Flower Fields
- Or you have to create it yourself
Scheduling

- PRODUCT MUST BE READY FOR SALE WHEN SPRING BREAKS.
  - No guarantees – just be ready
  - Quick turns = many turns = $$$

- Small growers selling locally
  - Base market dates on weather records
  - Always a gamble...
Scheduling continued...

- Larger producers
  - Ship to different climates
  - Target dates for those markets
    - Cool season crops for Florida in December and January
    - Spring annuals for Fla. ready by March 1
  - Work northward with product
  - Even if spring comes early, product fate determined by WEEKEND WEATHER
So when do we start?
(scheduling!)
Production steps

- Define products needed
- Estimate target market dates
- Set sowing and transplanting dates based on market dates
- Order seed, tags, flats and inserts, media, etc.
  - Germination rate affects seed # needs
  - Plugs have no germination losses, but still some shrinkage
- Order plugs in (seed-grown or vegetatively prop.)
  - Most companies require 12-15 weeks lead time
  - Significant discounts for early orders
  - Ordering off “spec” – not desirable for either party
Production steps

- Transplanting
  - Plug trays “explode” into benches full of product
  - Space planning is crucial
  - Labor needs are high (scheduling!)
  - Labeling and record keeping: essential
    - Many software packages for scheduling and inventory
Production steps

- **Growing on:**
  - Categorize and place in greenhouse zones according to temp. needs
    - Vinca, begonias = warm
    - Impatiens, marigolds = moderate
    - Dianthus, petunias, pansies = cool
Production steps

- Size control
  - Control fertilization
  - Control watering
  - Lower temperatures
  - Plant growth regulators (PGRs) (watch for delay in flowering)
  - DIF
    - But, do you want DIF in a mixed-species house?
Postharvest/shipping

- Quick delivery is essential
- Easy mobility of product is needed
  - Rolling racks
  - One driver/unloader
- Water well prior to shipping
- Educate customers: P.O.P.
- Maintenance of product?
Turns = Multiple crop cycles in same space

- Important part of cost accounting
- Example: 1,500 sq.ft. of impatiens finished in 36-cell flats = 1,080 flats
- Production period: Feb. 1 to June 1
- Decide between two plug (starter plant) sizes
  - 512s: smaller plug – cheaper per plug – longer time to grow out
  - 288s: larger plug – more expensive – shorter time to grow out
A few words about greenhouse growing of perennials

- Perennials offer great variety in product lines, extend your sales window, and can be produced in existing greenhouse or nursery facilities...
- BUT: competition is increasing, consumers are getting more knowledgeable...
Growing bedding plants vs. perennials: what’s the difference?

Bedding plants
- Decades of hybridization
- Easy to propagate
- Few or no special needs to flower
- Loads of cultivars
- Lots of cultural information

Perennials
- Less hybridization or selections made
- Most still original species
- Prop. more complicated
- May need specific environmental conditions to flower
- Fewer cultivars
- Cultural info limited
Target markets

- Wholesale
- Retail
  - On-site
  - Mail order
- Growing for:
  - General public
  - Landscapers
  - Gardeners
  - Experienced gardeners
- Know your competition
  - Sig. number of container nurseries are growing perennials
Perennial display gardens

- Boosts retail sales
  - Customers love to see combinations!
- Can serve as stock plants for some easy-to-propagate species
Product sizes

3.5”-4”  Quart  1 Gallon (or old “trade” gallon)  2 Gallon
Product sizes

- Traditionally, early spring=smaller, later summer = larger

- Small pots
  - Pros – quicker turn, one plug/pot, competes w/annuals
  - Cons – less of a “buffer” for post-harvest (over- and under-watering)

- Larger pots
  - Pros – can handle more “stress”, instant impact
  - Cons – longer crop cycle, more plugs/pot?
Scheduling perennials: two schools of thought

**Natural cycle**
- Sell plants “green” or at normal flowering time (accelerated?)
- Less overhead
- Lots of competition
- PPA Promotion: “June is Perennial Gardening Month”

**Greenhouse forcing** (coaxing?)
- Sell plants in flower
  - Consumer demand for color
- Requires more facilities/resources
- Timing/scheduling tricky
- Confused consumer?

**OR a combination of the two!**
Perennials - basic needs for flowering

Whether “natural” or “forced”

- Temperature (Vernalization)
- Correct photoperiod
- Age/size
Basic needs for flowering:

Vernalization

- Nature’s warm-cold-warm cycle
- Cold temperatures req’d. for flower development
- 35-40°F, 4-8 weeks
- Species-dependent:
  - Has to have it to flower (*Heuchera sanguinea*)
  - Speeds things up and/or more flowers (*Armeria maritima*)
  - Doesn’t matter (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)
Basic needs for flowering:

Vernalization cont.

Accomplish by

- Nature (pot in fall or winter)
- Cooler
  - Lights? (incandescent, doesn’t need much)
  - Ventilation, bit of fungicide
- Greenhouse (tough in the South)
- Buy pre-cooled (vernalized) plugs
Basic needs for flowering:

Photoperiod

- most perennials produce flowers as days get longer

- Species-dependent:
  - Has to have it (*Rudbeckia ‘Goldsturm’*)
  - Speeds things up (*Echinacea purpurea*)
  - Doesn’t matter (*Iberis sempervirens*)

- Choices for early flowering:
  - Extend daylength: 14-16 hour day
  - Night break or cyclic lights (11:00 pm-2:00 pm)
  - Incandescent bulbs fine, or HID
Basic needs for flowering:

Age/size requirement

- Many perennials must attain a certain size to initiate flower:
  - Mature enough to perceive cold treatments
  - Critical number of leaves or nodes
  - Whether grown from seed or cuttings
  - Examples: *Aquilegia*, *Lavandula*, *Campanula carpatica*
Greenhouse temperatures

- Depends on species/natural bloom time
  - Grow cool: (35-50°F nights)
    - Small containers (4-6” pots); Better quality but slower
    - Early spring through early summer flowering perennials
  - Grow warm: (60-65°F nights)
    - Summer and fall flowering perennials (and herbs)
    - To speed up flowering in the last two weeks of spring crops
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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>No response to long days</th>
<th>Long days beneficial</th>
<th>Long days required</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>No response to cold</strong></td>
<td><em>Perovskia atriplicifolia</em></td>
<td><em>Leucanthemum x superbum</em> ‘Snow Lady’</td>
<td><em>Coreopsis verticillata</em> ‘Moonbeam’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cold beneficial</strong></td>
<td><em>Armeria maritima</em></td>
<td><em>Echinacea purpurea</em> ‘Bravado’</td>
<td><em>Rudbeckia fulgida</em> ‘Goldsturm’</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cold required</strong></td>
<td><em>Iberis sempervirens</em> ‘Snowflake’</td>
<td><em>Astilbe x arendsii</em></td>
<td><em>Physostegia virginiana</em> ‘Alba’</td>
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