

## INTEGRATING PROPAGATION WITH SALES

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*North Haven Gardens*  
*Dallas, Texas*

First, we should take a look at the philosophy of operating a garden center or retail nursery. It is our job to supply plants for local use obtained from local and distant sources. We contact the gardening public in a residential area and are therefore customer oriented. We have large colorful displays of seasonal items to tempt customers.

We greet all customers on arrival and encourage them to browse. For stock we carry a wide variety of plants including:

- Bedding plants
- Herbs and vegetable plants
- Ground cover plants
- Water plants
- Cactus
- Hanging baskets
- Espalier plants
- Standards
- Summer flowering tropicals
- Small trees
- Large balled trees to \$500 size
- Azaleas and rhododendrons
- Ferns, outdoor and indoor
- Roses
- Fruit trees
- House plants
- Large indoor plants to 16' high for offices and banks
- Bromeliads
- Citrus
- Pot mums and other seasonal potted plants
- Orchids

Tubbed and potted plant specimens for house and patio

All plants are kept in a healthy condition by using constant feed, spraying periodically and pruning and are repriced and recanned as required. Information about culture, soil preparation, feeding, planting, light tolerance and hardiness is supplied by salesmen. Our personnel consists of a manager, 5 salesmen, cashier, gardener, deliveryman and 3 part-time students. Four months a year we almost double this staff.

We have a retail and landscape nursery, started in 1951. It was out of town and required three years before it was taken into the city. We have gradually developed it into a landscape contracting and wholesale growing operation as well. The unique thing about our nursery is that we sell a very wide variety of plants. It has been amazing how many different plants can be grown and used in our area. In fact, one neighboring nurseryman once commented on a landscape plan of

ours that he was asked to bid on that he not only did not have any of the material on the list, but didn't even know where to get it.

When I worked at the New York Botanical Gardens, we were able to obtain many new plants from sources all over the world, but found it difficult to introduce plants. I could show slides of new plants to garden clubs but could not tell them where to get them. At one time we made some new plants available to members but it soon strained our budget and personnel just to try and dispose of the plants grown. We found it a lot easier to grow than distribute. In our nursery we have tried to make new plants available to the public.

*Bedding Plants:* Many years ago, the use of bedding plants was very limited. Color was something occasional when flowering shrubs bloomed. Most nurseries that handled bedding plants sold only small market packs and only for a couple of months in the spring. The few growers in our area tried to be out of plants by early May. This practice is still true in many parts of our country.

We found that bedding plants are a "plus" item. People could come in for peat moss, fertilizer and insecticide or some other item and be so impressed by some group of blooming bedding plants that they would add these to their purchase. It could become a habit and it did.

We found that by stocking quality bedding plants in a large variety until mid-August, our total sales had gone up considerably in what were usually slow months. We found many customers from other nurseries coming over to buy plants and wondering why we were the only ones with bedding plants. We also feed and water our plants so that they are salable all the time. I notice in visiting other nurseries that plants are often starved and burned to such a degree that it is difficult to find a salable plant in the salesyard.

In advertising our bedding plants, we usually mention the large variety and the "all-American selections" we have available. Others advertise big on price. We are selling beauty and quality, not price. As a nursery, the image we create should be associated with beauty. We sell beauty, *not* 100-lbs. of soil with a green stick in it, not something that will require hard work, or something that will mess up your car or clothes. We want people to come in and see beautiful plants and want to buy them.

Sometimes we cannot move a plant we think is good. We have found the Dallas Park Department very helpful. Copperleaf acalypha, never went over big until the Park Department had large beds of it at the airport and the state fair. We now sell many thousands each year. This year, we gave some plants called talantheia to the Park Department. We saw this rich red-foliaged plant used in Miami on large roadside plantings. We expect to move many in the next two years, after the Park Department uses them.

A special strain of large gerbera daisies were produced by a grower in southern California. The flowers were large and often double on large robust plants. We bought seed at \$100.00 per ounce and sold several thousand in bloom the first season at premium prices.

'Gardenmeister' is an orange-flowered fuchsia that can stand heat better than most fuchsias in our area. We bought rooted cuttings in Seattle and built up a large supply and sold them all during the first season. Now we have found a source of supply in California so we will buy them already grown.

'Sybil Holmes' is a pink, double-flowered trailing geranium good for hanging baskets. The supply of these plants and cuttings have been limited for several years. We propagated what we could and sold large quantities each year.

Lantanas that are hardy and grow three-feet tall are not salable in our area. The heavy-flowering dwarfs are salable. By collecting all dwarfs available and seeing which did best, we have had a hard time keeping production up with sales. We plant them in 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " pots and sell nearly as many of these as we do petunias. We have found that if you sow seed of roses which are highly hybridized you get a wide mixture in the progeny. However, if you sow seeds from some of the desirable lantanas, the progeny is almost identical to the mother plants. We have also found this to be true of *Pyracantha* 'lodense'.

Many years ago, we brought in about 50 varieties of chrysanthemums a year for three years. We wanted plants that would be dwarf, bloom early and be compact growers with heavy-blooming display. We have selected about ten varieties that have answered our needs and are now supplying a quality plant in our area. We sell both 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " and gallon in quantities that we never thought possible. The selections are listed below:

'Ruby Mound'	(Red)	'Dolli-ette'	(Bronze)
'Remembrance'	(Red)	'Bronze Queen'	(Bronze)
'Yellow Supreme'	(Yellow)	'Apricot Sheen'	(Apricot)
'Peking'	(Yellow)	'Corsage Cushion'	(White)
'Minnpink'	(Pink)	'Ostosa'	(White)
'Fuchsia Fairy'	(Purple)		

Just having large displays of quality plants available at the right time is enough to increase sales.

The reasons why I went into growing plants for our retail sales are:

1. We can have a steady backed-up supply of quality plants. There are not many growers in our area. We extend the selling season. We can have larger stocks on hand all the time.
2. We can have plants that are not available otherwise in the trade.
3. It gives us an opportunity to introduce new plants and have ample supply when plants are scarce.

4. Some items are more profitable when grown by us.
5. We can increase total volume sales.

We have an annual increase in sales as a result of this policy.

Organization of our growing department:

20,000 sq. ft. heated plastic houses.

10,000 sq. ft. unheated plastic houses.

6 acres of growing area, including large trees.

Personnel: 18-28 employees this year.

Propagation and frames	6 employees
Greenhouses	2 employees
Field	7 employees
Sales	4 employees

We have purchased a Pakit machine for ground covers, liners and bedding plants.

Container plants we have grown when scarce:

*Rhaphiolepis* in variety

*Cotoneaster glaucophylla*

*Buxus sempervirens* 'Welleri'

*Ilex vomitoria* 'Nanan'

Dwarf Burford holly

*Ilex cornuta* 'Rotunda'

*Ilex* 'Nellie R. Stevens'

Dwarf white crape myrtles

*Parthenocissus tricuspidata* 'Lowii'

(*Ampelopsis* 'Lowii')

Pigmy barberry

*Clematis armandii*

*Euonymus japonica* 'Aureo-marginata'

*Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Maculata'

*Hypericum patulum* var. *henryi*

*Liriope* 'Christmas Tree'

*Liriope* 'John Burch'

*Liriope* 'White'

*Liriope* 'Variegated'

*Nandina domestica* 'Nana'

*Pyracantha* 'Variegata'

*Pyracantha* 'Santa Cruz'

*Rosa banksiae*

How do I know how many to grow?

1. On most plants we usually think in terms of a 10% annual increase.
2. Where we have over-supplied, we think in terms of what we have actually sold that year and may even reduce this.
3. On new items, we guess.
4. Some new items go over well the first year as a novelty. The next year our customers want something different.

When the Moraine locust was new, we purchased and sold 325 the first year. Then we purchased the same amount for the second year and had 220 left over.

5. On bedding plants, we'll often have extra sown for reserve and if sales are slow, we dump the seedlings.
6. During the busy season, we buy if available to supplement our production.
7. We sow seed every week or every other week in season.

*Ground Covers:* We grow about 40 varieties in 2 1/4" pots. Flat sales did not work out here when we tried it.

For each variety we make a monthly check giving:

No. to have salable	No. now on hand	No. salable (also no. booked)	No. still rooting	No. to propagate now
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To keep up with sales we sometimes buy rooted cuttings.

We often have extra cuttings rooted but not potted until required.

For a long time we were not permitted to ship calomondin citrus into Texas. We have since built up a stock and now grow enough to supply other nurseries.

WALTER KRAUSE: Thank you very much Ralph. Do you have some questions in mind for Ralph Shugert, Ralph Pinkus or Duane Sherwood.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How do you treat the cuttings from the time you take them until the time they go into the bench.

DUANE SHERWOOD: We take them out of the field and wrap them in wet burlap. Then we take shears and make the cuttings. Some of the cuttings have heels and some do not. We don't wound the base of the cutting or take the needles off the base. We take a whole hand full of the cuttings and dip the base in a 1:10 dilution of Jiffy Grow for 5 seconds and place them in the bench.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you wound them?

DUANE SHERWOOD: No, we don't wound them.

RALPH JACK: Do I understand that you do not heat your cutting house?

DUANE SHERWOOD: It is not heated. The temperatures in there will get down below freezing. We do have bottom heat at 70°F.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What was your cutting medium?

DUANE SHERWOOD: Very coarse sand. I think it is important to have a well drained medium.

PETER VERMEULEN: This is a question for Duane Sherwood. Have you found in your different mother plants any

difference in number of roots per cutting or position of roots on the cutting?

DUANE SHERWOOD: We haven't observed too much difference in the number of roots but in cuttings from one particular mother plant all the roots did come from one side. I don't know if this is typical or not.

RALPH SHUGERT: Why did you not wound these cuttings?

DUANE SHERWOOD: Because my dad never told me that was necessary.

PETER VERMEULEN: Do you find a difference in rooting when cuttings are taken from different positions on the stock plant?

DUANE SHERWOOD: Like I mentioned earlier, we take all the cuttings we can from the stock plants and pay no attention to the position from which the cuttings are taken.