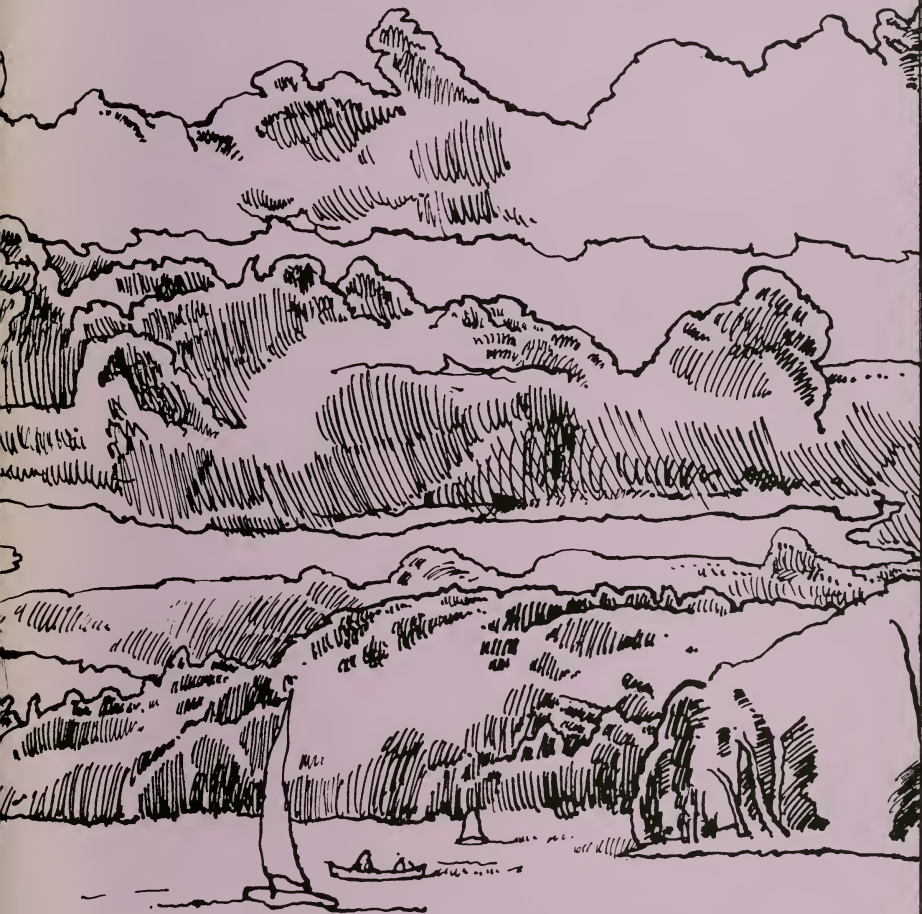


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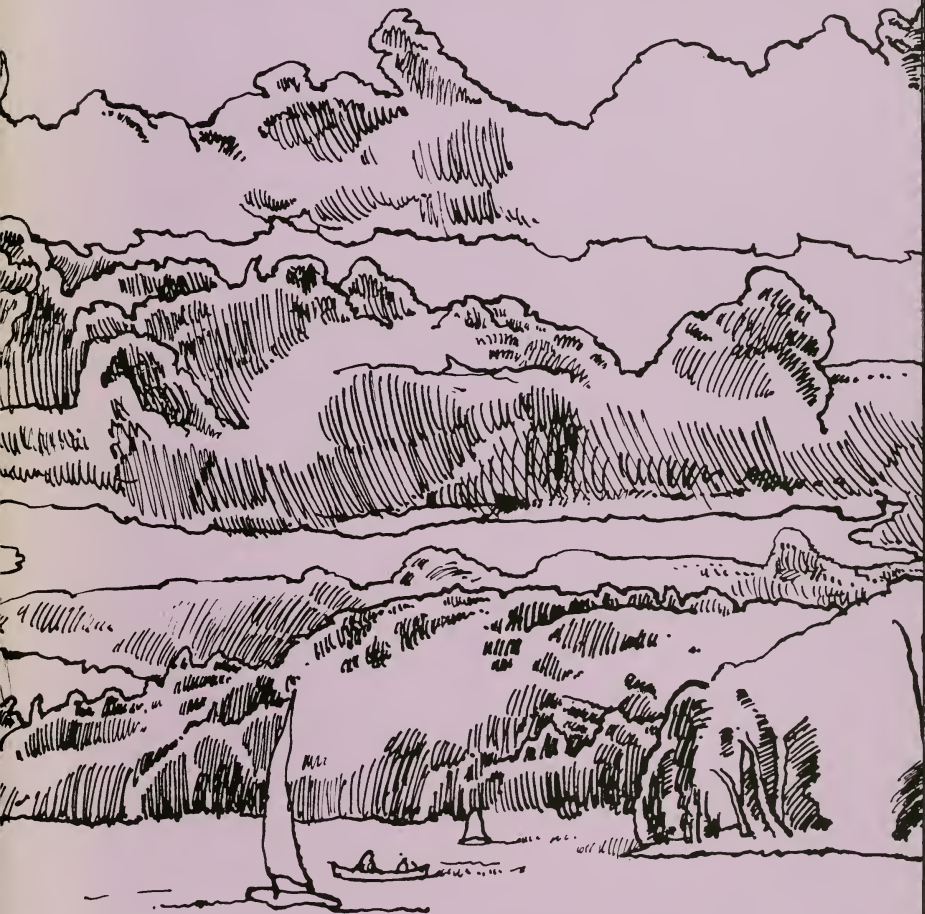
Wednesday, August 12 *Summer Meeting* See page 18

JUNE/JULY 1992

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Wednesday, August 12 **Summer Meeting** See page 18

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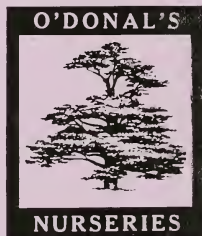
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APRIL 20-OCTOBER 12 *Ameriflora '92 Horticulture Exposition*, Franklin Park, Columbus, OH; for information: (614) 645-1992.

JUNE

16 *Maine Landscape & Nursery Association Twilight Meeting*, 5 PM at Winding Brook Nursery, Arundel, ME; for information: Rich Churchill at (207) 767-9646.

23 *FTD District 1C Annual Meeting*, Clarion Hotel, Nashua, NH; for information: Peter Collins at (603) 882-2723.

JULY

11-15 *Ohio Florists' International Floriculture Industry Short Course*, Cincinnati Convention Center, Cincinnati, OH; for information: (614) 487-1117; fax (614) 487-1216.

21 *Connecticut Nurserymen's Association Summer Meeting*, hosted by The Plant Group, N. Franklin, CN; for more: (203) 872-2095.

23-26 *American Association of Nurserymen Convention and Nursery Industry Exposition*, Columbus, OH; for information: (202) 789-2900.

26-31 *PPA Perennial Plant Symposium*, Stouffer Tower City Plaza Hotel, Cleveland, OH; for information: Dr. Steven Still; phone—(614) 771-8431; fax—(614) 876-5238.

28-30 *Pennsylvania Allied Nursery Trade Show (PANTS)*, Valley Forge Exhibit & Convention Center, King of Prussia, PA; for information: (717) 238-1673.

29 *Rhode Island Nurserymen's Summer Meeting*, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI; for information: (508) 761-9260.

AUGUST

5 *Joint Meeting: New England Nurserymen's Association/Massachusetts Nurserymen's Association*, hosted by Stewart's Nursery, Turners Falls, MA at the Greenfield, MA, Fairgrounds; for information: John Bragg at (508) 534-1775.

12 *The New Hampshire Plant Growers' Association Summer Meeting*; Jolly Farmer, East Lempster, NH; for information: Chris Robarge at (603) 862-1074.

12 *New Hampshire/Vermont Telflora Unit Summer Meeting*; Jolly Farmer, East Lempster, NH; for information: Everett Aldrich at (603) 444-2201.

19 *Vermont Plantsmen Summer Meeting*, Grand Isle Nursery, South Hero, VT; for information: Scott Pfister at (802) 244-7048.

20-21 *Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Trade Show (PLANTS) & Conference*, Expo Mart, Monroeville, PA; (717) 238-1673.

31-September 4 *Third International Geranium Conference*, Hans Christian Anderson Conference Center, Odense, Denmark; for information: Richard Craig (at Penn State) at (814) 863-2191.

OCTOBER

19-21 *The 1992 New England Greenhouse Conference*, Sheraton Sturbridge Inn, Sturbridge, MA; for information: Richard Emerson at (603) 329-5525.

NOVEMBER

5-7 *The 1992 International Plug Conference*, Buena Vista Palace, Orlando, FL; for information: Julie A. Stewart at (708) 208-9080.

LOOKING AHEAD

February 3-4, 1993 *New England Grows '93*; Hynes Convention Center, Boston, MA; for information: Virginia Wood at (617) 964-8209.

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The *Plantsman* is published in early February, April, June, August, October, and December with copy deadlines being the 5th of each prior month. While camera-ready ads are preferred, set-up assistance is available at a nominal fee. Free classified advertising is offered as a member service. We will carry a short message (no artwork or logos) for one or two issues of The *Plantsman*.

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For further information, please contact the editor: Robert Parker at the UNH Research Greenhouses, Durham, NH 03824, (603)862-2061; or PO Box 5, Newfields, NH 03856, (603)778-8353

EDITOR: Robert Parker ✦ DESIGNER: Joni Doherty

Cover Drawing by Robert Parker

Editor's note:

The photograph accompanying the profile of Windham Nursery in the April/May issue was taken by Debbie Useilka, an employee there. Sorry, Deb, for the omission.

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**Telaflora:
Design-America on August 12**

The New Hampshire/Vermont Unit of Telaflora Florists is proud to have been asked to work with the New Hampshire Plant Growers' Association at their 1992 Summer Program. The Unit will conduct its annual Design-America Competition at this event. The finest floral designers from both Vermont and New Hampshire will present their creative artistry and be judged by their peers. In addition, the Unit has invited vendors of floral supplies to join in the Tailgate Trade Show. The two hundred Telaflora shops in Vermont and New Hampshire are eagerly looking forward to this event.

Everett Aldrich
Vice President
NH/VT Telaflora Unit

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improved considerably in quality year after year. While a couple of entries were rather overly commercial and under-designed, many of the gardens and landscapes presented were on a par with past offerings of the Granite State Garden and Flower Show, which in turn has often compared favorably in quality with the New England Flower Show in Boston. Those involved in the planning and building of the show extend a welcome to other people in the industry to participate in 1993. Competition among exhibitors is low, cooperation is high, and everyone said they actually had fun in the process and got some work lined up too. Something to think about next winter.

Each year for the past twenty or so has seen the Greenhouse Open House on the UNH campus, sponsored jointly by the Department of Plant Biology and the Horticultural Technology program at the Thompson School. Usually it falls on the weekend before Easter, which means it roams between March and April from year to year. This year's Open House was on April 3-4. The date has not been set for 1993. The theme changes each year, but the format remains similar. There are lectures and demonstrations by faculty and staff, tours of research and teaching greenhouses, displays and educational exhibits, a flower and garden show put on by Her-

Tech students, and all the experts you ever wanted to stump with your plant questions. Free soil tests are offered, as well as diagnostic clinics for diseases, insects, and weeds. Admission is free.

I haven't heard anything about reviving the Granite State Flower Show. Fortunately there are these two alternatives in New Hampshire. Elsewhere in the region, Maine does a show and of course there's the Show of Shows in Boston, if you can get to the exhibits through the crowds. Happy Spring to all.

John Hart teaches at Thompson School of Applied Science.

**The Marty Mitchell
Scholarship Fund**

We still have hopes of obtaining over \$10,000 for the Marty Mitchell scholarship fund. Many students are finding it difficult to pay for the college education today, yet we need good teachers of vocational agriculture. To date we have \$6,755 towards our goal. Marty has done so much for agricultural education over the years that it's time for us to show our appreciation and at the same time encourage others with an interest in agriculture and teaching.

If you've already sent your gift, thanks. If you forgot, please do it now while it's still on your mind. Please send checks to: UNH Fund 'Marty Mitchell Scholarship,' Development Office, John S. Elliot Alumni Center, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH 03824.

Let's help others as Marty helped us.

David L. Howell
Adult & Occupational Education
Program
College of Life Sciences &
Agriculture
UNH, Durham.

Interest on the money received will be used for scholarships for all students in the College of Life Science and Agriculture.

**New Hampshire's
Secret Flower Shows**

John Hart

The Granite State Flower Show wasn't held this March, but two other shows of interest did take place. The first, the Seacoast Flower and Landscape Show, ran three days (March 13-15) at Pease Air Force Base. The show has been presented for six years as a fund-raiser by the Portsmouth Regional Visiting Nurses Association.

Each year has seen the Portsmouth show grow in size and attendance. The exhibits have also

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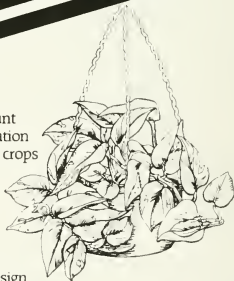
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NEW GUINEA IMPATIENS UPDATE

Dick Zoerb

JUST WHEN you thought that growing couldn't get any more interesting, another group of New Guinea Impatiens cultivars, called Paradise, is about to make its presence felt. This is another series developed by Kientzler and distributed by the Paul Ecke Ranch. Consisting of 13 varieties named after tropical islands, this new series is being trialed across the country. Its predominant characteristics are compactness, self-branching (pinching is *not* recommended), early flowering, and extra large flowers. Initial reports are very encouraging from those who have seen the product.

Here in the northeast, New Guineas are still increasing in consumer popularity, although not all growers have learned how to successfully combat the adverse effects of thrips and the low light and temperature levels associated with the winter months. The addition of 13 Ecke root and sell licensees, three of whom are in New Hampshire, has in itself increased the availability of lesser minimum amounts of Kientzler New Guineas. This has enabled the smaller first-time grower to try them without mortgaging the greenhouse. For those growers who have become too frustrated growing from a rooted cutting, there are an increasing number of 4"-and-up pre-finished pots being produced as an alternative to starting from scratch.

Yoder has been added to Fischer and Four Star as fully licensed propagators maintaining stock plants. Fischer now offers as unrooted and rooted cuttings the 12 varieties from its own Danziger and Bull (7 Vars.) series, as well as the Kientzler (19 Vars.) and Mikkel Sunshine (11 Vars.) series. Mikkelsen has recently added 5 new varieties to the original 7 "Lasting Impressions" introductions. Its Sunshine series of 24 varieties continues to form

the basic offering of a large number of licensed propagators nationwide.

If one were to total up the available New Guinea varieties, including the up-coming Paradise series, the numbers would approach 90. While this may seem like an extraordinary amount to deal with, it does offer customers a greater opportunity to experiment and to find favorites within each of the aforementioned groups.

For those first-time growers who might need guidance in selecting a good mix of the Ecke Pure Beauty cultivars, I would suggest the following 6 to meet a minimum shipment: ANAEA,

AGLIA, THECLA or FLAMBE, MELISSA, MIMAS, and SA-TURNIA. All of these are in the top 9 in Ecke's '90-'91 sales rank and can be used for any purpose from 4" pots to 10" baskets.

The two primary requirements for starting a crop from the rooted cutting stage are not to overwater or fertilize in the beginning and to maintain a night temperature in the 68-70 degree range and a day temperature between 75-80 degrees. Maximum light levels are also important during the winter months

Dick is the area sales representative for Gloeckner & Co., Inc. ✽

TIPS

The Griffin Guru Concurs

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Our postal service has been automated to the point that machines read the addresses. Not from top left to right like we do, but from bottom right to left, then up. Unless you address your letters correctly, the machine sends them over to a pile for a human to read. "Big deal," you say, "they send my bills fast enough." But what if it's your customer sending you your check for payment? Recently the Post Office cracked down on Griffin and delayed mail that was improperly addressed. Lots of you still use your Main Street address and not P.O. Box 36 (which is our proper address).

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Since the guy who owns the bat makes the rules of the game, take just a moment to look at your address as well as those to whom you're mailing.

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NHPGA to Sponsor Fall Recertification Meeting

The New Hampshire Plant Growers' Association will sponsor a day-long Pesticide Applicators' Recertification Meeting in the fall. The Board felt, seeing that many members' permits are up for renewal in 1993 and that people sometimes find it difficult to attend several sessions for one or two credits each, that it would be useful to organize a meeting in which as many credits as possible are offered within a reasonable amount of time.

The tentative date is November 12. The location (again tentative—in Manchester) will be announced. The five hour session (9-12 and 1-3) will offer five credits—two core and three that will qualify for greenhouse/nursery/interior plant categories.

More information will be forthcoming as details are worked out.

Nursery Certificate Fee

(from *Weekly Market Bulletin*, April 8 & 22)

A fee of \$25.00 will now be charged New Hampshire nurserymen for state inspection and approval of nursery stock.

This fee covers to some extent the time spent traveling to the site, inspecting and certifying the nursery stock, providing information, and issuing the certificate.

Several people have wondered how this fee will be paid. According to Dr. Siegfried Thewke, State Entomologist, "after the inspection is completed, we will hand you a copy of the field report listing conditions found and a bill for the nursery certificate. We would prefer you to mail your check along with the yellow billing copy to the address at the top of the yellow copy. Be sure to make your check out to 'Treasurer, State of New Hampshire.' When we receive your fee and have recorded what information we need, you will be sent your nursery certificate."

If you have questions, you can call Dr. Thewke at (603) 271-2561.

Flowable Limestone Eases Plug pH Adjustments

(from *Greenhouse Manager*, April, 1992.)

Jolly Farmer in East Lempster has found flowable limestone can raise soil pH instantly on fertilizer-sensitive plugs without causing adverse plant reactions.

Jolly Farmer tested pH levels in trays of geranium plugs last October. One application of W.A. Cleary Chemical Corp.'s flowable limestone raised the growing medium pH by half a point without leaf burning.

The findings are contingent on the limestone being injected through the irrigation system at the lowest recommended label rate early in the growth cycle.

For more: Daniel English at Jolly Farmer; 1-800-695-8300.

Governor's Task Force Recommendations

(from an article by Mary K. Reynolds, Urban Forester and Director of the America the Beautiful Tree-Planting Program for the State of New Hampshire. Mary is also a member of the NH Arborists' Association and serves as Chairperson of the Association's Certification Committee.)

New Hampshire has lots of trees. New Hampshire today is the second most heavily forested (about 87%) state in the country. But having lots of trees and having lots of safe, healthy, and attractive trees are two different matters.

With this in mind, in September, 1989, Governor and Mrs. Gregg, in cooperation with State Forester Jack Sargent, the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, established the Governor's Task Force on Community Trees in New Hampshire. Sixteen people representing a va-

riety of disciplines were asked to serve on the Task Force. The three cooperating agencies assigned employees to provide technical support.

The purpose in establishing the Force was to encourage the planting and maintenance of trees in communities, to inform people about the value of trees, and to foster greater appreciation of a resource most people take for granted.

Task Force activities were many and varied. Arbor Day celebrations were much more widespread—over a hundred community programs were held. Members of the Task Force formed working committees which submitted reports to Governor and Mrs. Gregg in December, 1990.

Some of the information presented is surprising. For example, one working committee reported that approximately 50% of the trees planted each year are planted incorrectly. Many of the trees are poorly chosen, planted in the wrong location, planted too deeply, or pruned improperly. Many aren't cared for after planting.

In New Hampshire, where some 30-65% of the shade tree resource of 25-30 years ago has been lost to Dutch Elm Disease and maple decline, it's important that the trees planted today survive and prosper.

Unlike states with many large urban centers, 65% of New Hampshire's communities have populations of less than 2,500. Only nine percent of New Hampshire's 234 communities have populations exceeding 10,000. Small communities have limited resources for community programs and this presents a special challenge.

People tend to think of trees as permanent, perhaps because of the relatively short human life span. But they are not and the Governor's Task Force has made us aware of the need for citizen participation in the preservation of these important pieces of our environment.



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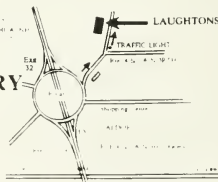
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Enriched Fertilizers Can Thwart Powdery Mildew

(from Greenhouse Manager, April, 1992)

Fertilizer enriched with potassium silicate can help certain powdery-mildew susceptible vegetables from getting the disease, an Ohio State University researcher reports.

"We can use plant nutrition as a method of causing biological resistance," says Bill Bauerle, associate professor at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center at Wooster.

"The savings is phenomenal," he said of the silicate he is continually injecting at 25-100 ppm. "You don't have to spray or anything."

Bauerle tested the fertilizer on cucumbers, but theorizes that potassium silicate can also work for such disease-prone plants as begonias and roses.

Plastic from a Plant

(from NY Times, April 28, 1992)

Scientists say they have grown a high-quality plastic from a genetically-modified plant, a step that may lead to crops of biodegradable plastic from potatoes or sugar beets.

Researchers at Michigan State University and James Madison University in Harrisburg, Va, said they had altered the genes of a small weed of the mustard family,

known as Arabidopsis, in the laboratory to produce the plastic PHB, polypropylene. Dr. Christopher Somerville, a botany professor at Michigan State, writing in the current issue of Science magazine, said they were able to synthesize a type of polyester in the plant. The plant has the chemical throughout the leaves and stems.

A spokesman for the University of Michigan said the next step would be to alter the same genes in another plant like the potato. "They know exactly where to put the gene," he said.

"The research opens the way for a possible new and profitable cash crop for farmers," Somerville said.

The Energy Department hailed the research because the final plant would produce—without petroleum—a plastic that would degrade naturally in landfills.

1993 All-America Selections Announced

(from Greenhouse Product News, March/April, 1992)

Two flowers and two vegetables have been honored as All-America Selections (AAS) winners for 1993.

NIEREMBERGIA. 'Mount Blanc' is noted to be the first white nierembergia. It was rated highly for its performance under heat, drought, and severe weather con-

ditions. It spreads about 12 inches and reaches the height of about 5; it flowers freely—and free from pests—all season with little care.

Nierembergia is not commonly used, so AAS intends to promote the benefits of this annual to growers.

'Mont Blanc' has received the Gold Medal Award from Fleuroselect, the European testing organization. The variety was entered and produced by Takii and Co., Ltd., Kyoto, Japan.

VERBENA. The second AAS flower winner is a heat and drought tolerant verbenella called 'Imagination.' It has blue-violet or dark lilac umbles, lacy foliage, and a spreading habit that can reach 1-2 feet.

Bred by Ernst Benary, Munden, Germany, 'Imagination' is also a Fleuroselect winner. It may be grown using normal verbenella culture.

PUMPKIN. Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion, ME, received its first-ever AAS award for the 'Baby Bear Pumpkin.' Fruits weigh 1 1/2-2 lbs, are 4-6" high, 3-4" high, are considered good for children's jack-o'-lanterns.

The variety is less tolerant of cold or damp soils, so growing transplants is encouraged. Smooth, moderately ribbed, bright orange, flavorful fruits mature in 95-110 days.

TOMATO. 'Husky Gold' is an F1 hybrid that earned high marks for its sweet flavor and compact habit. The 7-8 ounce fruits mature about 70 days from transplanting, have thick walls and a meaty gold interior.

Bred by Petoseed Co., Satcoy, CA, this hybrid is suitable for both seed and bedding plant markets.

All-America Selections, Downers Grove, Illinois, will be promoting these four winners in consumer garden publications and point-of-purchase materials during the coming months.

Publications Available

The Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Inc., was formed to disseminate information on the production and marketing of specialty cut flowers in the field and greenhouse. In keeping with this objective, the following publications are available through ASCFG:

ASCFG Membership Directory and Buyers Guide.

"Lists all members...provides thumbnail descriptions of many growers, buyers, suppliers...the best source for specialty cut flowers in the United States." Members—\$15.00; non-members—\$20.

Proceedings of the Third (1990—Ventura, CA) and Fourth (1991—Cleveland, OH) National Conferences.

"Topics include post-harvest handling; annuals, perennials and bulbs as cut flowers; drying; dyeing...much more." Members—\$20; non-members—\$25.

Also, back issues of *The Cut Flower Quarterly* are available. Each issue is \$2.50. Ask for an index of specific articles.

For information, contact APCFG, 155 Elm Street, Oberlin, OH 44074; fax (216) 774-2435.

Also from Ohio, the Ohio Florists' Association will enter its sixth year of publishing the *Ohio State Flower Grower's Hotline*, "a timely newsletter which announces unexpected insect, disease, cultural, or manufactured problems occurring in commercial floriculture production."

Despite the name, the *Hotline* reaches national and international subscribers. The 1991-92 roster includes 47 U.S. states and twelve foreign countries. A minimum of ten *Hotlines* are mailed during a 12-month period. The cost is \$15 in the United States, \$20 in Mexico and Canada.

For information, contact the Ohio Florists' Association at (614) 487-1117.

Asian Gypsy Moth Emergency Declared

(from AAN Update, April 3, 1992.)

United States Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman recently declared an emergency on the Asian Gypsy Moth and announced funding from USDA of \$14.4 million for a cooperative state/federal eradication program. The USDA announcement came after a concerted push for a control program by the AAN, the Oregon Association of Nurserymen, and other western nursery associations. The announcement represents major progress in keeping the insect, accidentally introduced into the Pacific Northwest by way of Russian ships, from establishing itself and spreading into other areas of North America. However, there are concerns over the effectiveness of the USDA management plan to keep new introductions from occurring.



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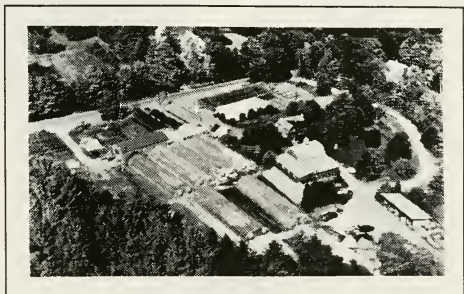
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INTERVALES, CURRENT USE, SPI...

Steve Turaj

"It is impossible, in a brief article, to give all that may be of interest, concerning the Agricultural resources, Mechanical advantages, and present advancements in the science of farming, that are now developed in Coos County.

It is certain, however, that no county in the State of New Hampshire possesses greater facilities in soil, in location and in all that makes an Agricultural district conspicuous than Coos. Her broad intervalees, her sloping hillsides, her rich meadows, all give her an advantage over most other localities, for growing most of the grains and grasses, and for grazing purposes."

So began James Beckett "a gentleman of Lancaster" in a letter to the NH State Agricultural Society reporting on Coos County—*Its Agriculture, Manufactures. Resources.* The year was 1858, no local agricultural society chapter yet existed and Coos was "but little known to many farmers of this state."

Asked to describe agriculture 'North of the Notches,' I can easily relate to Mr. Beckett's dilemma. Although Coos is visited by thousands during the year, I believe many think of it only as a region of heavily forested woodlands, mountains, and lakes. There is no denying that wood and paper manufacturing is the dominant industry in Coos. Of the county's approximately 1,180,000 acres, well over 90% is forested land. The forests provide thousands of jobs in mill working and timber harvesting, while multiple use management of these woodlands contributes significantly to the region's outdoor recreation and tourism industry.

My interest here, however, is in the remaining land—that used for agricultural enterprises. I tend to think of it as the more intensively managed land resource, which creates the open vistas which give Coos County its unique appeal.

Many of these 'true open spaces' are largely unseen until you leave such well travelled highways as Routes 2 & 3 to discover our intervalees—those low flat lands found between mountains, rivers and streams. Here a wide variety of agricultural products: hay, corn, potatoes, fruits and vegetables, are grown. The 1987 (most recent) Census of Agriculture identified a total of 141 crop farms in Coos. Although less in number than many New Hampshire counties, the majority farmed substantially more acreage, generally in the 260 to 1000 acre range. In fact, for total cropland acreage Coos

ranks 3rd statewide, closely following Merrimack, with Grafton in the lead.

Dairying is especially suited to our long, frigid winters and often rugged terrain. This, because as with most livestock industries, we are able to convert land unsuitable for other uses into high value animal protein. It certainly exemplifies "value-added" products:

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Not surprisingly, the Connecticut River Valley and its tributaries are where most of the county's dozens of dairy farms are located. It is on these dairy farms where the highest market value of agricultural products sold is realized. Turning again to the 1987 Census of Agriculture, we find \$6,381,000 of dairy products being sold, with additional dairy-related income derived from the sale of calves, cull cows, and surplus forage crops.

All NH farming has changed since Beckett's day, when a declining sheep industry was just beginning to give way to a developing dairy business. In competition with north-central and western states, often with more farm land, labor and a longer growing season, Coos and NH farmers have had to become more efficient and capital intensive. Besides being milk producers, mechanics, and carpenters they've had to become financial and personnel managers as well. With currently low milk prices (\$12.86 for 100 pounds of milk was the 'average'

price paid to our dairy farmers in February) and high input costs, every dairy dollar spent has to be carefully scrutinized.

Judging from phone contacts, attendance at Extension informational meetings, discussions with landowners, and agriculture industry people, one operating expense receiving plenty of attention right now is taxes, particularly NH's Current Use Law with its present revisions. I noticed this was also a topic of interest in the last issue of *The Plantsman*, which contained a concise explanation of those changes and an update on related bills.

In no other county is the impact of Current Use more apparent than in Coos. Based on 1990 Department of Revenue data, 61% of all its acreage was enrolled in Current Use, more than any other NH county. Of that total, 29,720 acres was reported in the farmland category of current use.

With the recent revisions to this law, especially the unifying of all farmland categories into one range (\$25-425), farm owners here have been giving particular attention to an option that's been around for some time...SPI. Anticipating potential tax increases to pasture land (Coos had 13,880 acres in 1987) previously valued in a \$25-120 per acre range and Christmas tree plantations, being assessed based on your soil's potential rather than an arbitrary value in the \$25-425 range often makes sense.

Having your farm's SPI or Soil Potential Index calculated may seem a bit complex at first, but the process is pretty straight-forward. Here's an overview and a few pointers which may help:

First, bring an accurate map with you to your Conservation District office. This can take many forms, perhaps your SCS Conservation Plan map or, if you've been involved with ASCS cost/share programs, they may have aerial photos. A survey map can also be useful. Know your boundaries; if you're uncertain, consider walking them with someone who knows the land. Most critical is for you to be able to identify fields and acreages. Be aware that change is constantly occurring; some fields may be reverting to woodland.

The information you provide will be reviewed by the Conservation District with SCS soil map overlays used to identify the soil type found on the farm acreage you've indicated. A rating value of 0-100 based on the soil's capability (not fertility) to produce crops will then be assigned to each tract with the total value divided by total acres, to yield the Farms SPI, i.e.:

50 acres X 90% rating = 4500

30 acres X 50% rating = 1500

20 acres X 20% rating = 400

6400 ÷ 100 acres = 64% Farm SPI

The Farm's SPI is what's then provided to the town selectmen or assessors who must use the SPI to determine the farmland values, if it's provided by you. An important note: Before utilizing the SPI, be certain to check how the town is presently valuing your farmland. In cases where the town is valuing your farmland on the low end of the \$25-425 range, using SPI may increase your taxes. An excellent Cooperative Extension fact sheet 'Current Use Update for NH Farmland Owners' which shows how SPI fits into determining the tax value of your farmland, is available at all county offices.

Right now many Coos County dairy and other farmers are looking hard at their land and SPI. They're finding that besides tax savings from SPI, savings are also achieved by getting a more accurate inventory of their land, identifying their actual crop and various woodland acreages. Looking a little closer at their soil's potential to produce different crops (see SCS's Non-Technical Soil Descriptions) can also help them develop more cost-effective cropping plans. Now may be the time to look over your land with whatever advisors you have available: Extension, SCS, Foresters, who can help in some of your long-term management decisions.

Steve Turaj is Extension Educator, Agricultural Resources, in Coos County. He's at 148 Main Street, P.O. Box 311, Lancaster, NH 03584 and can be reached at (603) 788-4961.



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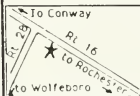
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TREE FERN JUNGLES & SCREENHOUSES

Peter Corey



IN FEBRUARY of this year I had the opportunity to travel to the Hawaiian Islands. It's not that I'm rich and decided to vacation in some exotic place, but rather that the air fare was right (\$10.00 round trip) and I couldn't pass up a great deal. The only catch was that I couldn't bring my wife and children. But somehow I found the strength to make the sacrifice and go alone.

Before landing, I read one of those guide books from cover to cover in order to decide which islands to visit.

I picked the big island of Hawaii because of its diverse climates and corresponding plant life.

One of my main goals was to visit some of the orchid and anthurium growers for which the island is famous. I wanted to see the various operations and was also hoping I could ship some of the flowers back to New Hampshire.

Finding growers was relatively easy. Most travel guides list a few of the most easily accessible. These growers have shops along the main highway and cater to the tourists. The displays are glitzy and their prices are no bargain. But to find those off the beaten path, I simply asked the grower I was visiting for directions to the next nearest grower.

Also very helpful is the *American Orchid Society's Commercial Orchid Growers Directory*, which gives full addresses, phone numbers and indicates whether or not an appointment is needed.

I found the growers to be as diverse as the island's climate. They ranged from the small back yard hobbyist to the huge multi-million dollar commercial operation. Some grew only orchids, anthuriums, or tropicals, but most grew a combination of crops. Each was interesting in its own way.

Let me describe the three operations which seem to accent the diversity of the group.

THE FIRST GROWER I visited by accident. I stopped for gas at the only gas station in the small town of Volcano. The store as very much like a general store in small town New England except that in one section of the store was displayed buckets of orchids, anthuriums, and proteas. I found out that the store owners grew these wonderful flowers in their backyard as sort of a hobby and that they not only sold their product in their store, but shipped world-wide as well. They were the only grower of proteas that I could find on the island of Hawaii. (Proteas are grown mostly on the island of Maui—next year's trip).

My favorite grower was small and family-owned and

operated. The staff consisted of three people—Mom, Dad, and son. The son (Glen) appeared to be in his mid-forties; his parents, in their seventies. Glen told me that he had lived much of his adult life in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He eventually grew tired of the long New England winters and the rat race of Boston and decided to return home to take over the family business.

They grew orchids and anthuriums in a unique and unusual way. In the early sixties, Glen's parents planted

rows and rows of tree ferns. As the tree ferns matured, they planted anthuriums and cymbidium orchids in the ground among the ferns. They also affixed phalaenopsis and other epiphytic orchids to the trunks of the tree ferns. The effect was a very natural setting that was both practical and aesthetically pleasing. The "tree fern jungle" required little maintenance. Some type of natural mulch was used to keep down the weeds and rain provided all the moisture needed. Harvesting the flowers was almost romantic. Each morning they would stroll through their self-made jungle and harvest the blossoms that were ready.

At the other extreme was a huge operation specializing in anthuriums and tropicals. It was very modern; their plants were grown in high-tech greenhouses (or—more accurately—"screenhouses," as all the sides were made of a black screen material). They wouldn't let me visit their ranges for fear I might carry in some insect pest or infectious disease. They did give me a tour of the grading and shipping department, which was immaculately clean, brightly lit, and filled with hundreds of buckets of graded flowers ready for packing and shipping. I was also shown the business office full of salesmen taking orders from all over the world and making entries into their desktop computers. It was all very impressive.

All the growers I visited were very friendly and helpful. Each was willing to discuss his operation, but at the same time, was somewhat protective—which is understandable.

I DID MANAGE to ship a large selection of tropicals and anthuriums back to my store in Littleton. I made it home before they did and had the pleasure of seeing them unpacked. They were well-received by the staff, but cautiously approached by the customers. Maybe Littleton isn't ready for the tropics yet.

As for me, I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in Hawaii, but I was glad to return to New England. I like our four seasons and the fact that I can go hundreds of miles in almost any direction without having to get on a boat or a plane.

Peter is an owner of Village Green Florist & Greenhouse in Littleton, NH.

**The 1992 Summer Meeting
of the New Hampshire Plant Growers' Association
will be held on Wednesday, August 12,
at Jolly Farmer in
East Lempster, New Hampshire.**

LIKE LAST YEAR, it will be a full day. Along with the opportunity to see the host operation, there will be the usual tailgate trade show. Last year, over sixty-five vendors participated. This year, even more are expected.

Again, like last year, there'll be an opportunity to gain two credits toward pesticide applicator recertification. Dr. Pat Vittum, Plant Entomologist from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, will give two talks, one before lunch and the other, mid-afternoon. Each talk will be worth one core credit. (The topics and the approval for credits by the NH Pesticide Board are not finalized, but no problems are foreseen. The credits should be acceptable to other states as well.)

The food will be extra good this year. Perillo's of Manchester is again catering, offering an all-you-can-eat barbecue (barbecued chicken, hot dogs, hamburgers, sausages, potato salad, macaroni salad, corn-on-the-cob, watermelon....). And in the morning, Jolly Farmer is offering its own homemade doughnuts and cider.

In the afternoon, an auction of merchandise donated by the participating vendors will be held. Peter Callioras from 'The Auction Professionals' of Colebrook has offered to contribute his services as auctioneer. Proceeds will go to the NHPGA scholarship fund. We thank all these generous people in advance.

Along with all this, at the same time and place, the New Hampshire/



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Vermont Telaflora Unit will be holding their own Summer Meeting and their annual Design-America Competition.

MANY CHANGES have taken place at Jolly Farmer since the NHPGA Summer Meeting was held there eight years ago.

The operation has grown in scale: today cyclamen, poinsettias, rooted cuttings, hanging plants, bedding plants, and plugs are produced under four acres of double poly. In August, eight houses will be filled with pansy plugs being grown for the Southern fall market.

The greenhouse operation has continually looked for ways to increase efficiency. There'll be demonstrations of Jolly Farmer's two-tiered system for watering hanging baskets and the recently completed fog chambers.

An automatic Blackmore drum seeder, a "cylinder on its side, picking up seeds and sowing all in one rotation," will be in operation. Skip Blackmore, its inventor, will be there to talk about it and answer questions.

One Jolly Farmer enterprise is the manufacture and sale of bark mulch. Visitors will be able to see a large industrial tub grinder—a 12-foot wide tub operated by a 600 HP V8 diesel "Cat" engine—used for making bark mulch in action. The tub holds up to twenty yards of material. The "rough stuff" goes in; the bark mulch comes out.

All this and more. Preregistration: \$23; or \$28 at the door. The door prize is a weekend for two at the Snowy Owl Inn in Waterville Valley.

**Wednesday, August 12
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CENTER CONWAY in mid-April is quiet. Winter is ending—the lawns and open fields are bare, but in the woods there is still snow.

But it's not completely quiet. At a cluster of structures near a spot on 302 where a broad bend of the Saco touches the road, trailer-loads of bark mulch and nursery stock are being unloaded.

The display islands in front are still empty, but branches in the store window are hung with Easter eggs and the buds on a newly-arrived shipment of rhododendrons promise more color to come. Another trailer-truck pulls up. The phone rings. McSherry's is getting ready for spring.

Before the McSherry family owned it, the property belonged to Western Maine Nurseries. A small wooden building by the road was used for retail sales and the rest of the nine acres was planted in evergreen stock.

Then, thirty years ago, Tom McSherry—having graduated from The Bartlett School of Tree Surgery, then having worked as an arborist for twenty years—decided to start his own business and bought the land from them.

Tom—who's the father of Gail, the present owner—put up a bigger building, put the little sales building behind it (where it's still being used for storing tools), and opened McSherry's Nursery and Tree Service.

At the time, Gail was selling antiques and her father thought it would make good sense to combine the two businesses at the same spot. Gail agreed. But she found she was getting more and more interested in plants. She finally stopped selling antiques, took courses at the UNH Thompson school, and took over the business herself. Her parents have retired and now her daughter Paige is working here—Paige works with the annuals in summer and sells Christmas trees and wreaths in the month of December.

The business is seasonal, open from mid-April to the end of October—plus that one month of Christmas sales. "Plant-wise, nothing much happens up here in winter," Gail says, "but in summer we're busy every minute." Along with Gail and her daughter, during the season McSherry's employs four other people: Kirsten Russell, who works with perennials ("and she's our gardener"); Bob Pond, who's been with McSherry's over twenty years ("He does everything"); Mark Moulton, who works with Bob, and Stuart Robertson, who takes care of customers on weekends.

This solid crew helps give McSherry's its positive and outgoing personality, but changes made over the last five years have contributed as well. Working with a consultant, Gail has made a lot of them. One of the first was inside the shop: "The space was dark and made you feel closed in," Gail said, so the unfinished wood walls were painted pastels; the ceiling, white. "The light, bright colors really opened it up."

THE NEXT STEP was to move the sales area for the nursery. "It used to be out back. We brought it up to the street, so people could see what we were doing." The driveway is a shallow loop along which bags of soil amendments are piled for convenient loading. On either side of the driveway, display islands (areas of bark mulch edged with pressure treated wood) were built to display containerized shrubs. Three octagonal islands are used for roses—one of McSherry's specialties. Gail sells hardy varieties that can grow in the north country. Her tips—"Plant the crown below soil level, mulch really well in winter, and don't cut them back until spring (there'll always be some winter kill; if you cut back in fall, there may not be any living plant left)."

Display gardens were developed ("in summer we're full of color") behind the rail fences along the edge of the road. When Western's sales building was moved, the foundation plantings stayed and annuals were planted inside them. Today a path



leads through an arbor (on which potted roses climb in summer) to a bright garden framed by the mature shrubs. Decorative wooden buckets, each filled with an Alberta spruce and lots of geraniums, repeat the curve of the drive.

While all this was being done, McSherry's was evaluating the store's product mix. "We were in the hardware business. There was no need for it—there are two good hardware stores in the area. So we got out of that and put our energy somewhere else. Now we're on good terms with both the local stores—we refer people to them and they refer people to us. Things are better for everyone." Today the shop contains fertilizers, a few chemicals, but mostly containers—all shapes and sizes: clay pots, cedar baskets.... "We tried lots of things—this is what our customer wants." (They also sell plastic pink flamingos.)

Outside, a wide range of cement garden statuary, ranging from an "Innocent Boy" fountain to a fairly realistic rhinoceros, is displayed. Again, "this is what our customer wants."

Next, a "Garden Mart" (made by Poly-Tex, Inc.) was put up to the right of the store. This 24x64 aluminum frame structure with a 6-mil-

white translucent poly covering on top and drop curtains on its sides is no production greenhouse, but a place to display and sell plants. Gail uses it for bedding plants and is very pleased with how it's worked out. ("There are no annuals sitting in the sun and rain: we have no rotted geraniums, no spotted petunias—we are quality oriented.")

Bedding plants and vegetables sell all season. McSherry's grow none themselves and in order to keep the Garden Mart full, require as many as three deliveries a week. Even in July and August, people "want color" and will buy mature, blossoming plants in 6 or 7 1/2" containers. In September, people want mums. "If you can protect your plants from that first frost in September, you can usually get another month of color" and people do just that—the season's brief and people up here make the most of it.

The next step was enlarging the parking lot. It's now a large grassy square subdivided by—nearest the road—a long wooden planter filled with evergreens and flowering crabs, then lines of railroad ties behind that. It can hold thirty-five cars. "The lot is only really full in spring, so it's planted in grass so we don't have to look at a sea of dirt the rest of the season." And people like it—

it's "country," an attractive change from a mall's asphalt.

Two years ago, the perennial sales area was redesigned. This is on the left side of the store. Materials are simple—wooden slat benches on cement blocks shaded by snow fencing on a pressure-treated wood frame, peastone on the ground. What seems unusual is the placement of the benches—none are at right angles. Previously, the area contained a series of long, narrow, wooden boxes parallel to the road. These were filled with soil and used for displaying the plants. "They worked as a barrier," Gail says. "People would have to make a conscious decision just to enter." Now there are no decisions—traffic seems to flow naturally around a variety of benches carefully arranged to draw the customer through to the rear.

The back edge was clearly delineated by keeping the last of the wooden boxes in place. This year a perennial display garden (more color) will be planted in it, giving customers a chance to see mature specimens of what they're buying. Three clematis vines (heavily mulched in winter) growing in wooden boxes climb onto the snow fencing in summer and in the far corner, a fountain and a fine specimen of Dutchman's Pipe

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(*Aristolochia durior*) create a focal point. The whole area seems park-like—there are places to sit; it feels natural to stroll.

THE PERENNIALS are arranged alphabetically according to Latin name. The catalog listing is alphabetical as well: "This makes it easier for the customer to find things and easier for us to restock." The types offered are hardy—mostly zone 3 and 4—asters, yarrow, phlox...there's a big selection of sedums and rock garden plants.

To the left of the perennial area are two other lath houses, a 30x50 house holding rhododendrons and azaleas and a 36x84 holding evergreens.

Fruit trees are a McSherry specialty—trees with Malling 7 or 7-A rootstocks. Most are apples, but they do sell some pears and the Reliance Peach. They come bare-root. To burlap them, McSherry's rents a mortar mixer to make the mix (two parts loam, one part peat). A plastic bag is put in a form and the burlap bag inside that. The tree is planted; the bags gathered, tied. The plastic holds the moisture—"we usually don't have to water until July."

"What grows in Portsmouth doesn't grow up here," but McSherry's

sells a lot of rhododendrons—the harder types: Nova Zembla, Catawba; "PJM is wonderful." They sell only the Mountain Andromeda—"the only one we can grow." They buy from northern growers. The PJM's come from Western Maine ("They bloom at the right time. It's important to have stock that's already adapted to northern climates.")

Along with the evergreens it ships in, McSherry's sells its own home-grown mugho pine, white pine, yew, and arborvitae.

GAIL RELIES on direct mail advertising to get the word out. She has a list of about 5000 customers and four or five times during the growing season, these customers receive a flier. The first is an announcement of their "Annual Spring Celebration" which is usually the weekend before Mother's Day. (refreshments, door prizes, free plants, and "specials.") The second will be sent before Memorial Day. She doesn't print a price list—"we want people to come and look."

She also advertises in the Conway and Bridgton (Maine) papers and may try radio—if the budget permits.

"Quality is our main selling point—quality and service. This is what we stress. Number three is price.

Sure, we have a lot of gallon-and-a-half flowering shrubs for \$9.99 and one-gallon junipers for \$6.99. The market demands that. We accommodate that need, but our primary concern is quality and quality is more expensive because it's so labor intensive."

This year there will be an additional selling point—a small (12x20) house for selling bright, colorful container gardens—a 'garden' of annuals in a single pot to be used for Memorial Day or simply for color on a patio or deck. The 'house' is actually three frames that will support plastic weather shading. But it's in a prominent position—right up front, between the store's main door and the Garden Mart. Gail expects lots of sales and a big success.

As I leave, I notice stratus clouds moving in from the west—snow is forecast for tonight—but there is a robin in the parking lot. Spring is coming to the mountains. And McSherry's will be ready. With flamingos and quality—and color everywhere. B.P.

For further information, McSherry's Nursery is located in Center Conway on Route 302 1 1/2 miles west of the Maine state line. The phone is (603)447-5442. ♦

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James S. Bowman

EPA is required by law to reregister existing pesticides that were originally registered before current scientific and regulatory standards were formally established. Specifically, those pesticides containing active ingredients registered before November 1, 1984. The reregistration process ensures that:

- (1) Up-to-date data bases are developed for each of these chemicals (or their registrations will be suspended or canceled)
- (2) Modifications are made to registrations, labels, and tolerances as necessary to protect human health and the environment
- (3) Special Review or other regulatory actions are initiated to deal with any unreasonable risks.

New data on registered products sometimes reveal the existence of a problem or a potential for hazard that was not known at the time of registration. Congress and EPA have developed various mechanisms to reach sound scientific decisions in these situations. One of these mechanisms is called the "Special Review Process".

Under the law, if a pesticide comes under suspicion by the EPA as possibly presenting unreasonable risks to humans or the environment, it must first announce its reasons and offer the registrant a formal hearing to present opposing evidence. At the same time it must run a Risk/Benefits Analysis. To help with the Benefits side of the analysis, the EPA, under the law, must give the Secretary of Agriculture a chance to respond with regard to the effectiveness and economic value of a pesticide compared to alternative chemical and non-chemical controls. A benefit assessment is specific for each registered use site (e.g., corn, apples, tomatoes, etc.). A benefit assessment is essentially an analysis of likely economic consequences resulting from the restriction or cancellation of a pesticide.

To respond to the EPA, the USDA Extension Service conducts a program called the National Agricultural Pesticide Impact Assessment Program (NAPIAP). Each state has a designated NAPIAP State Liaison Representative who gathers information on pesticide usage and responds to Assessment Teams assigned to develop information on the Biological and Economic Analysis of pesticides undergoing "Special Review". The assessment teams, made up of extension and research specialists from throughout the US, compile a document on the Biologic and Economic Assessment of whatever pesticide they have been assigned. This document is submitted to the EPA for consideration in their Risk/Benefits Analysis of the pesticide.

Here in New Hampshire we have responded to many of these requests for information and some of our University specialists have served on Assessment Teams. Our pesticide usage data is derived through two sources:

- (1) The NHDA Division of Pesticide Control pesticide usage database which gives us total pounds of active ingredient and acres treated on certain crops.
- (2) Grower survey data on more specific information on how the pesticide was used and alternative controls that are available.

With regard to the surveys, for the past two years we have conducted surveys on pesticides used in New Hampshire on apples, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, sweet corn, silage corn, squash, pumpkin and tomatoes. With the much appreciated response from over 200 fruit and vegetable growers we have been able to develop an excellent pesticide usage profile for our state for the years 1989 and 1990 that incorporates both the survey and state data on pesticide usage. This information has enabled us to respond to assessment team requests on recently "Special Reviewed" pesticides such as phorate, terbufos, carbofuran, aldicarb, diazinon, propargite, ethyl parathion, methyl bromide, metasytox-R, phosphon, dichlorvos, and trichlorfon.

This fall we will be conducting a survey on several non-food crops such as Christmas trees, turf, ornamentals, nursery, and floral crops (including greenhouse production) and golf course management. We will be seeking pesticide usage information from an estimated 200 growers in these categories which we will use in connection with the NHDA data. With this information we should have good information on the pesticide usage on all the major crops grown in New Hampshire. We are totally indebted to the willing response on the part of your growers to make this special project possible.

As long as we have pesticides and pesticide laws, there will be this constant threat of losing some of our most needed pesticide tools. At the present time the US Department of Interior is urging the EPA to conduct risk/benefit assessments on 27 pesticides linked to bird kills. The pesticides are aldicarb, azinphosmethyl, bendiocarb, carbofuran, chlorpyrifos, chlorpyrifos, diazinon, dicofol, dimethoate, disulfoton, ethion, fenamiphos, fenitrothion, fenprophothion, isophenphos, methamidophos, parathion (ethyl), phorate, phosphamidon, sodium fluoracetate, strychnine and terbufos.

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If you currently depend on any of these pesticides, or for that matter any pesticides for growing your crops, you will certainly want to respond to our surveys on non-food crops that will be conducted next fall. This is the way you can help us keep these production tools "down on the farm".

Dr. James Bowman, Extension Specialist/
Entomology, is at Nesmith Hall, UNH,
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Tina Sawtelle

CREATING DIRECT MAILINGS THAT WORK

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MAKE AN OFFER THAT IS WORTH COMING FOR: Your customers are very valuable to your business over a long period of time. Your current customers are very likely to be receptive to an offer that fits their needs. The value of an individual customer over time makes special offers economically sound. Give them something worth coming for.

IT'S ALL IN THE FIRST IMPRESSION: Your direct mail piece has to stand out from the rest. Make sure your design is eye-catching, appealing, easily recognizable. Recognition is achieved by keeping consistent logos, format, styles, colors, etc. Be sure your headline offers a benefit to your customer. Instead of "We Offer Beautiful 7" Flowering Annuals," use, "Your Garden Can Be Beautiful In An Instant With Our 7" Flowering Annuals."

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS KNOW WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO DO AND MAKE IT EASY: Display a map prominently on your piece and/or include explicit but simple directions. Include your phone number for more information on several locations. Include an entry form for a special drawing or offer on your piece so they will hang onto it and bring it back.

HOW TO SEND IT: You can mail first class or bulk rate. Each has limitations. Check with your local post office for information. Often you can hook up with your local printer or mail house and use their bulk permit. It does save on postage dollars. But keep a few tips in mind. It has been proven that mailings sent first class get a higher response. It has been shown that stamped mail gets opened quicker than printed permits. It has also been shown that crooked stamps get more attention than straight ones and two stamps get more attention than one!!

SOME STATISTICS: There is a rule to direct marketing called the 80/20 rule. It says that 80% of your business will come from 20% of your customers. Try to identify this segment and increase your mailings to them. A 3% response is considered excellent for a response to direct mail or an advertisement coupon or offer.

Consider mailing to customers within a 20 mile radius. Successful mailings can increase your business tremendously.

Tina Sawtelle, principal of Sawtelle Marketing Associates, consults with agricultural retail businesses on marketing and merchandising. In addition, she teaches agricultural business management techniques at the UNH Thompson School. For information, call (603) 659-8106.

Minutes

April 6, 1992.

The meeting was held at Demers Garden Center, Manchester. Present were Bob Demers, Chris Robarge, Andrea Capron, Peter Corey, Roger Warren, Richard Zoerb, and Peter van Berkm.

It was decided to repeat last year's three-part (an introductory letter, a Plantsman, and a registration form for the Summer Meeting) promotion/membership drive this year as well. Different people will be targeted.

The program was finalized and more fine tuning was done for the NHPGA Summer Meeting at Jolly Farmer on August 12. Chris Robarge will handle registration; Peter Corey and Roger Warren will moderate the two pesticide recertification lectures; Bob Demers and Peter Corey will assist the auctioneer.

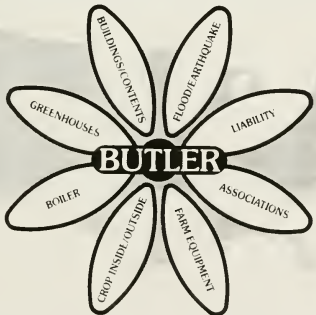
There will be two twilight meetings in the fall— at Strawberry Banke in Portsmouth in September (Andrea Capron and Peter van Berkm are working out the details.) and Murray Farms in November. (Dick Zoerb is making the arrangements for that one.)

The Board decided to offer a pesticide recertification meeting in the fall. The probable date is November 12; five credits (three category, two core) will be offered in as many hours.

It was decided to look into holding the 1993 Winter Meeting on one of the days of the Farm & Forest Exposition. We would have a business meeting, speakers, and lunch at a nearby location in the morning, then give attending members the afternoon to enjoy the exposition and possibly listen to a speaker sponsored by the NHPGA. A decision will be made in June.

The meeting adjourned at nine.

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COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY FOR THE SMALL GROWER

Bill Cerny

Edited from GrowerTalks, April, 1992

I'VE GONE through many stages of computer awareness. Computers were the demons that screwed up your telephone bill or mixed up your income taxes, and it always took about six months to correct the error. Then I went through a stage where computers intrigued me. I began to see the benefits they offered. But Cerny's Greenhouse is approximately 20,000 square feet—far too small, I thought, to efficiently utilize a computer.

Keeping track of crops is a paperwork nightmare In the past year we have computerized our inventory management and our bookkeeping and payroll records. In our small business, we produce approximately 400,000 cuttings—mainly geraniums—for a regional wholesale market. These are all presold. Keeping track of when to plant, harvest and ship all these orders was a paperwork nightmare. At a trade show, a computer company salesman showed me how his software could benefit our operation. After that I thought about it for almost a year—I had to be assured that it would save me both time and money.

No experience required for computerization Finally, we took the plunge. We purchased Starcom Plant Partner System, although there are many fine companies in the greenhouse software market. I highly recommend choosing a company that creates greenhouse applications instead of using over-the-counter software. The support and expertise you receive from people familiar with our field is invaluable. There are many ways to purchase these systems. Someone with limited computer experience might be able to purchase software only. Some phone support and reading might be all you need to get started with a new system. We didn't have this experience, so we purchased a more complete package. This included all hardware, software setup and instruction. Having someone spend a week installing the system on-site isn't cheap. But for me,

having never used a computer before, this service was invaluable. It allowed us to be fully operational within one week.

Software is available for inventory management Here's an example of how we use the software: Generally, we enter the order into the computer during the phone sale by using a laser pen on a bar code price sheet. This is quicker than writing it out and entering later. From that one simple entry, the system generates acknowledgments, invoices, picking tickets and statements. It also prints work schedules so we know exactly what cuttings to harvest or ship each week. Whenever an item is entered, we get an up-to-date inventory status so you know exactly what's available. Using this greenhouse-oriented software, there's a wide array of detailed sales and plant reports at your fingertips. "Flexibility" is the key word with this system. The software is updated periodically, so you needn't fear buying a system that will become obsolete.

Another valuable asset is the 800 number telephone support line. Help is only a phone call away for any questions or problems you may have.

Do-it-yourself financial reports Our other software package, called Ag-base, is from Farm Credit Services—formerly Production Credit Association. Before computerizing, I would send my accountant deposit and disbursement information, and he provided me with a monthly financial report for a fee of approximately \$1,000 per year. But when my accountant saw my computer investment, he said I should really be doing it myself. Again I asked that dreaded question, "Will it mean more time in the office?" He tried to assure me that it would mean less time.

We took the plunge again. For approximately a \$1,000, one-time fee, we now own the software that produces the same financial reports and does our payroll. If it's the time of month to pay bills, I enter the information into the computer. When all the check amounts are entered,

the system prints them out. All company names and addresses are already in the computer, so very little typing is involved. I put the check into a windowed envelope, and I've eliminated writing the check and addressing the envelope.

My time spent paying bills has been cut in half. All bank deposits are also entered in the computer. From these simple entries, it prints out monthly financial reports including General Ledger, Profit and Loss Statement and Cash Flow Forecasts. It even helps balance the checkbook.

Time-saving payroll program The payroll program is another great labor saver. I usually write only about 10 payroll checks each pay period. But making computations and looking up deductions still took plenty of time. Then each month I'd sort through the figures to make a federal tax deposit. Once again, I'd be sorting through the figures to make quarterly reports.

Now I simply enter in hours each employee's worked, and it prints out their checks. It gives me the monthly deposit and quarterly report information for state and federal taxes. All that comes basically from one entry.

All the financial and payroll reports this system generates are very clear and concise. You don't need to be a CPA to understand them. This software also has periodic updates and phone support. Likewise, it's comforting to know that when I do call for help, I'm talking to my accountant, who is already familiar with my situation.

Computers can accomplish some great tasks, but simple, little things benefit you also. Not writing checks by hand or telling a customer on the phone immediately what they bought from you last year without searching through filing cabinets are little things that mean a lot.

It's time for small growers to open their minds to the technology available to them and realize that they, too, can take advantage of it, to survive and prosper in years ahead.

Bill Cerny is owner of Cerny's Greenhouse in Tomahawk, Wisconsin.



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Durham, NH 03824
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Box 2217

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569-5978 (H); 569-5056 (W)

Peter Corey

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Bruce Holmes
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Center Tuftonboro, NH 03816
569-2127

Henry Huntington
Pleasant View Gardens
RFD #3, PO Box 3701
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435-8361

Peter van Berkum

4 James Road
Deerfield, NH 03037
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Roger Warren

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July 28-August 2 Cheshire Fair, Route 12, North Swanzy;
information: Wesley Cobb at (603) 357-4740.

July 30-August 2 North Haverhill Fair, Fred C. Lee
Memorial Field, North Haverhill; information: David Keith
at (603) 787-6696.

August 21-23 Cornish Fair, Town House Road, Cornish;
information: Robert Bladen at (603) 542-4622.

August 15-16 Belknap County 4-H Fair, Mile Hill Road,
Belmont; information: Tom Corbin at (603) 524-5125.

August 27-30 Plymouth State Fair, Plymouth (Take Exit
26 off I-93); information: J. Stanton Hillard at (603) 536-
2305.

September 2-7 Lancaster Fair, Route US 3, Lancaster;
information: Raymond Belanger at (603) 837-2770.

September 3-7 Hopkinton State Fair, Contoocook Fair
Grounds, Contoocook; information: Alan Hardy at (603)
746-4191.

September 11-13 Hillsboro County Agricultural Fair, Route
13, New Boston; information: John Robertson at (603)
588-6500.

September 17-27 Rochester Fair, 72 Lafayette Street,
Rochester; information: Jeffrey Taylor at (603) 332-6585.

October 1-4 Deerfield Fair, off Route 107, Deerfield;
information: Willis Rollins, Jr. at (603) 463-7421.

October 10-12 Sandwich Fair, Center Sandwich;
information: Earl Peaslee at (603) 284-7062.

