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Grower News

Issue number 2

Editor John Esser

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Last Newsletter

This is the last Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin (CFGW) Grower Newsletter that will be sent to non CFGW members. The seven issues mailed in 2008 and January, 2009 as well as this issue have been paid for by a USDA grant intended for the education of Wisconsin greenhouse owners and growers. If you have enjoyed receiving these Grower News mailings and want to continue receiving them, join the CFGW. A year's membership costs only \$100 and includes six membership meetings each year, an August field day to view CFGW supported trials at the University of Wisconsin's West Madison Research Station, a full day Fall Greenhouse Conference in September, membership in the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation, their Green Side Up magazine, a continuation of this newsletter and the camaraderie of other greenhouse owners and growers. **To join email info@cfgw.org or call any board member or John Esser at 608-244-3088.**

If you are already a CFGW member for 2009 ignore this note about membership.

Editor

In Lieu of ??

Due to the recent loss of a family member of one of our employees and the loss of valued Green Industry Members "In Lieu of Flowers" hit home. We in the floral end of the Green Industry have noticed this fad for quite a few years and have silently accepted a decline in business.

The big box stores and grocery stores have added floral departments along with their line of flowering, potted plants, all which have cut into our floral business. That along with corsages and centerpieces becoming a thing of the past, the funeral business has become the backbone of the floral industry. The ability of a skilled florist cannot be duplicated in a big box or grocery store. The experience and artistry of a quality florist is showcased in sympathy flowers.

One of our valued employees of 12 years lost a family member a short time ago. "In Lieu of Flowers" was put in the obituary as is customarily done now. When I noticed this I started to question "How have I failed to educate my own employees and what can I do to change perceptions?" About the same time there was an obituary in the Greenside Up with the same "In Lieu of

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A member of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation (WGIF).

Flowers.” Once again the old thought process kicked in and a sudden realization that my own industry as a whole might not be aware of this fad and its effect. I asked myself “When have flowers become a waste? Did not flowers use to be the means to show affection, sympathy, caring and to just brighten someone’s day? Do I advertise in a way that might possibly hurt others, such as The Vermont Teddy Bear who blatantly brag their bears last longer than flowers.

We also have a greenhouse, so I once again asked myself, what other crops am I growing that will become the next “waste.” Will it be sod, trees, flower beds or maybe the family greenhouse? How can I inform others?

About 7 years ago I had the honor of being asked to join the Commercial Flower Growers of WI board. Working with this group has truly been a privilege but it also carries some responsibilities. One of which is to help educate our own industry. “In Lieu of Pay” I was asked to write this article with the hopes of bringing awareness to our industry, myself included. Hopefully we can all look at how we do things and change any that might have a negative impact on others. This federation of Green people working together can make a difference.

Thank you taking the time to read this “In Lieu of Working.”

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To Join the CFGW

Email info@cfgw.org or call 608-244-3088.

Alice visits Krueger Wholesale

Wisconsin’s Alice in Dairyland, Ashley Huibregtse, visited Krueger Wholesale Florist, Rothschild, Wisconsin in March, 2009 to learn about cut flower production in Wisconsin.

For over 30 years Krueger has supplied retail florists in Wisconsin and nearby states with cut flowers and supplies. Krueger’s first greenhouse was built in 1974 to produced cut roses but in recent years they have been specializing in Hybrid cut lily production as well as Stephanotis and Calla Lilies in their 85,000 square foot greenhouse. Krueger’s Greenhouse Manager, Scott Hanson, gave the tour explaining how they plant 800,000 Oriental, Asiatic and LA lily bulbs each year. The bulbs are imported into the United States from Holland and South America by the Matthew Miller of the Fred C. Gloeckner Company.

Ashley was told that planting is done weekly year around with bulbs being planted in plastic crates filled with coconut coir which is shredded coconut husks. This growing media provides a porous substrate for growing the lily plants with sufficient air, moisture and nutrients. When the bulbs have flowered they are pulled from the growing media and composted into mulch. Some coir is replaced with each new planting.

Scott showed Ashley the watering and fertilization system which is done through drip tubing running the length of each lily bed. Ashley saw how fertilizer is injected into the water and applied when required by the plants. Scott said plant nutrition is monitored frequently for optimum growth.

Lily plants grow three to six feet tall depending on the variety and time of the year and can take up to 120 days to flower from planting. Cutting is done daily 365 days a year. The cut flowers are graded on site, packed into ten stem bunches and sleeved for protection. After grading they are put into refrigeration to extend their life. The lily stems are cut just before their first flower opens. Scott says the stems are cut just when the first flower is starting to show color. He said this cutting technique as well as putting the stems in water shortly after cutting makes a higher quality flower with longer life than those shipped into the United States.

Krueger is growing *Calla aethiopia* which is the beautiful 6-9" long creamy white flower which is popular for Easter and weddings. The plants can grow 6-7' tall in the greenhouse and flower only in the late winter and spring. Scott Hanson said some of the bulbs they are growing are over 100 years old and was purchased from local greenhouses.

Stephanotis flowers are produced in clusters, are pure white and very fragrant. They are also popular for weddings. These flowers grow on vines which can grow as tall as 20-30' but are kept shorter at Krueger for easier harvesting.

The current Alice in Dairyland, Ashley Huibregtse grew up on a Plymouth, Wisconsin dairy farm and knows agriculture. This was evident in her knowledgeable questions about plant growth, nutrition and understanding of Scott's explanations. Although greenhouses differ from farms but both grow plants. She is a 2008 graduate of the University of Wisconsin Madison in Elementary Education and Communications.

Editor

Free Money & Better Ventilation

Terry Lyons, J & D Manufacturing reviewed the basics of greenhouse ventilation at a Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin membership meeting. He said there are two types of ventilation systems, natural and powered. Natural ventilation is accomplished by vents on greenhouse roofs or side walls. Heated air rises out of the vents or winds blowing over the greenhouse create a vacuum in the greenhouse drawing in fresh air. Powered exhaust fans mechanically blow hot air out of the greenhouse to bring in fresh air from outside. Power exhaust fans improve cooling during the hottest times of the year.

Air inlets are important when calculating greenhouse ventilation requirements. There are two types, natural vent openings and shutters. Intake venting that is too small will decrease the efficiency of the ventilation system and reduce exhaust fan life.

The factors used to calculate a proper ventilation system are greenhouse size, altitude and foot candles of light entering the greenhouse. Mr. Lyon said it is important to contact a horticultural supplier or ventilation engineer to calculate the proper size for a ventilation system.

Ventilation controls are important in making the most cost effective and efficient ventilation system. What are the best choices analog or digital, single or two speed, combined heating and cooling, manual variable speed or digitally variable and PC compatible? Discussing the system with a professional will help make the best selection.

Horizontal air flow (HAF) will augment a ventilation system. HAF is accomplished by small fans mounted to blow air horizontally across the tops of the

plants. HAF fans de-stratify the air, increase transpiration from leaves, eliminate hot and cold spots, reduce condensation and mix the CO₂ in the air providing better growing conditions for plants.

Traditional cooling can only reduce air temperatures as low as the outside air but evaporative and high pressure mist/fog can reduce temperatures more making a more suitable growing environment for the plant. Evaporative cooling consists of wet pads with outside air being drawn across them to cool the greenhouse air temperature by up to 13°f. High pressure mist or fog cooling is accomplished by spraying fine water particles into the greenhouse to reduce air temperatures.

Mr. Lyon said there is FREE MONEY available from Wisconsin's Focus on Energy to make greenhouse ventilation systems more efficient. Rebates of \$50 per HAF fan are available when they are connected to variable speed controllers and have the proper cfm/watt ratio. Also incentives are available for improved climate controls, IR (infrared) rated poly covers and power vented unit heaters. Other incentives may be available. For Information contact Focus on Energy at www.focusonenergy.com/incentives/business or 800-762-7077.

Editor

West Madison Trials

The Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin (CFGW) is holding a Field Day at the University of Wisconsin West Madison Research Station, 8502 Mineral Point Road, Madison on from 9:15 to noon August 6, 2009. This is a free trial and all are welcome whether a CFGW member or not.

The trial includes vegetatively propagated Lobelia, Lantana and Yellow Calibrachoa. Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin board member Bruce Sadowski has been promised plants from all commercial suppliers that we can identify. These varieties will all be grown in the ground and we hope a new container trial.

In addition Syngenta has donated 25 plants of 140 varieties of vegetatively propagated liners ranging from Achillea to Vinca for growing at the West Madison Station. Many of these 3,500 plants are scheduled for introduction for the 2010 spring season. They are all varieties which are common in greenhouse pot and combination pot production.

Also being trialed there are 25 seed propagated cut flowers, 15 varieties of seedless table grapes, 12 varieties of wine grapes, 15 cultivars of summer/fall bearing raspberries, 24 varieties of Strawberries and a large collection of ornamental grasses both native and hybrid plus hundreds of daylilies.

This is an extensive trial and a wonderful opportunity for greenhouse and garden center growers and owners to see how plant varieties perform in a Wisconsin garden.

Editor

Ralstonia Testing

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) has been ended its Ralstonia testing for 2009. In late January, 2009 Ed Knapton, president and John Esser, executive Secretary of the Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin (CFGW) were informed that DATCP intended to test the unrooted cuttings coming into Wisconsin, from several countries, for Ralstonia Race 2 Biovar 3. This is the disease which caused many problems to

Wisconsin and other states Geranium producers in 2003 and 2004. During those two years greenhouses were quarantined and many plants in pots and containers were destroyed.

On February 9, 2009, at a CFGW Board meeting Adrian Barta told the board that DATCP was unsure about the quality of testing being done on the unrooted Geranium cuttings being imported into Wisconsin by various suppliers. Adrian explained that DATCP had been informed by the USDA that there were fourteen Wisconsin growers receiving unrooted Geranium cuttings. He said these are the greenhouses they would test and the tests would take about two days to complete. The board asked Adrian several questions which were answered by email on February 13. We were told then that the DATCP testing would proceed. Under Ed's direction John replied to Adrian that the CFGW would not stand in the way of their testing.

Two greenhouses were tested but it turned out that the results would take at least two weeks to get results. John and Wisconsin Green Industry Federation's Brian Swingle met with DATCP officials on March 13. Brian and John told DATCP that a two week delay between the taking of the test to receiving results was too long. The quality of the liners as well as the finished crop would be jeopardized with such a long delay. The DATCP personnel listened to their comments. When the tests proved negative on these two grower's geraniums they were informed. With these negative tests and assurance from the USDA further testing halted.

Editor

In Memoriam

Harry Radtke, father of board member George died on March 17, 2009 after a long

illness. His life was celebrated on March 27 at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mequon. Harry is survived by wife Marilyn and children Rhonda, George and Liesl.

Editor

Calendar of Events

June 25, 2009 Membership meeting at Memorial Florist, Appleton, WI. This meeting will include a discussion of the spring season. Contact John Esser for more information.

August 6, 2009 CFGW Field Day at the University of Wisconsin West Madison Research Station, Madison, WI. See the Lobelia, Lantana and yellow Calibrachoa plus other plants in a bedding and container trial. Contact John Esser for more information.

September 16, 2009 CFGW Fall Greenhouse Conference at Floral Plant Growers, Denmark, WI. A full day conference with speakers Peter Konjoian, Harvey Lang and Suzanne Baker. Contact John Esser for more information.

October 15, 2009 CFGW Membership meeting at Greentek, Edgerton, WI. The speaker and topic not yet determined. Contact John Esser for more information.

November 12, 2009 CFGW Membership meeting at Prange Greenhouse, Jackson, WI. The speaker and topic not yet determined. Come to see their Poinsettia crop! Contact John Esser for more information.

To join the CFGW

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