

NURSERY PLANTS FOR EXPORT MARKETS

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Recently we saw the end of a campaign in New Zealand to stimulate the interest in export by manufacturers and producers as well as make people aware that export is vital. Slogans such as — ‘The Ship Won’t Wait,’ ‘Our Jobs Depend on Export,’ ‘Take the Plunge,’ were common advertising. It is without doubt that interest in export has been generated, but little can compare with the interest in horticulture as an export and over a short period we have seen the small grower to the large million dollar company making claims that “moves are being made in the horticultural field” — where does this leave us? We are concerned, in particular, with the field that most here today are familiar, i.e. the growing of live plant material, whether it be for local or export sales.

In ten years we have seen considerable leaps in the value of live plant exports. The following is the F.O.B. value of live plant exports (ref. N.Z. Statistics Department).

1969 —	\$39,600
1972 —	\$96,800
1976 —	\$141,195
1978 —	\$530,859 (export to 27 countries)
1979 —	\$1,172,844

In the last 12 months (between July 1, 1978 and June 30, 1979) we have seen a jump of over 100%. Once again I stress that these figures are F.O.B., i.e. not including insurance or freight costs.

Over the past three years I have been fortunate to be able to look at market possibilities in England, France, Japan, Saudi Arabia, U.S.A. and Thailand, and from these trips have been able to formulate definite patterns as to crops to grow and what the customer expects. It is very easy to fix in our minds likes and dislikes to certain plants that are always in demand in New Zealand and, if given sufficient thought, one can almost be certain that this plant would be a seller in a certain country. Careful planning and research of markets must be made before expansion and growing plans are implemented. An example of this is the liking the French have for red colours and any such plant giving a display of red and which can grow in their climate results in interest and sales. This certainly does not mean that interest does not exist for general stock. Comparing two plants (1) *Photinia* and (2) *Cortaderia* ‘Gold Band’, the first is new but is giving what many ask for — the red colour. The second can be found in large numbers and *Cortaderia* as a plant is

grown not only for colour of plume but for the flowering period. 'Gold Band' is a new form giving yellow variegated foliage; to sell the plant it is not necessary to sell it as an entirely new plant, but market it purely for its variegations. Still using these two plants as samples, it is necessary to understand what the customer expects as a "liner" so that when delivery is made, disappointment will not occur, which can result in delayed payments. It is also necessary to ensure that the delivery date from New Zealand is acceptable to the buyer — yet delivery times are mainly set by when the plant is suitable for shipping. *Photinia* for delivery in March can be too soft if late growth is experienced, whereas delivery in May/June should be recommended.

Stock Plant and Seed Sources: Mother plants must be selected for even growth and be true-to-type. When volume is required sufficient stock must be available not only to produce the number required but to allow for those which do not make the grade, as well as rejects when packing. Seed sources must be reliable not only for trueness-to-type, but delivery dates as well, so that the grade can be obtained to meet that which has been quoted to the customer as a delivery date:

Cutting and Seed Production: A high standards of hygiene throughout the growing season is essential and this starts from the mother stock through to the work area, the propagation area, and the general liner beds. Consideration must be given to all visible pests and diseases but, equally important, root inspection during the growing period is essential so that root rot diseases can be detected at an early date, and the necessary action applied.

Media for Growing: It is essential to be fully aware of the quarantine requirements of the countries to which you intend to export and, if necessary, grow in a medium acceptable to that country. Recently we have seen the move toward bark in growing media; as this is a wood product and classified the same as sawdust it is not acceptable to ship into countries which currently accept only our peat/sand media on the roots.

Packing Preparations: A clean well-prepared packing shed is necessary which offers adequate shade and light. Preparation benches should be clean and preferably covered with polythene so that cleanliness can be maintained. Plants once shaken out should be carefully examined, trimmed, and prepared for dipping through a fungicide and insecticide dip. Dipping the plants once they are rolled can be acceptable for certain plants, but where large foliage or dense foliage is present, individual dipping is advised. This avoids foliage remaining wet for a long period; if packed in this condition overheating will occur, re-

sulting in damaged plants at the destination.

Inspection by a Ministry of Agriculture Field Officer should be made at this stage and, if necessary, depending upon the size of the shipment, several inspections may be required. Early advice to the M.A.F. is necessary and where weekly consignments are being shipped, a schedule of times and dates for inspection should be made available to the Field Officers as early as possible.

Packing Media: Generally accepted world-wide is sphagnum moss and, in some countries, peat. Whichever medium is used, it must be free of foreign material and be of a very high quality. If countries such as Japan are receiving the goods, it is advisable to fumigate the moss or peat first so that any organism is destroyed. In recent tests large numbers of saprophytic nematodes were found in moss and peat, although we are aware that they cause no harm to the plants, they can be confused with other parasitic nematodes and, if this is the case, the receiving Authorities can and will fumigate without question. It is essential that every factor be considered when shipping as delays can cause losses as well as loss of goodwill. The use of woodwool should be avoided as this is forbidden in many countries; clean shredded newsprint is recommended.

Cartons: Strong waxed boxes with adequate ventilation are recommended. The plants are stood upright and held firmly into position by each other. At no stage should the plants be covered with plastic as this causes overheating and sweating.

What I have covered here are only a few of the important considerations required for exporting. Before involving oneself to any great financial cost a thorough examination should be made covering all aspects from growing to marketing as one weak link can result in losses to all parties. Growing for export can only be considered a challenging and rewarding market.

NITROGEN RESPONSE OF PROTEACEOUS SHRUBS AND OTHER NURSERY PLANTS GROWN IN CONTAINERS

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Abstract. A range of proteaceous shrubs and other nursery plants were grown in containers with soilless media and various N levels primarily supplied from Osmocote (26 percent N). Plants demonstrated a range of responsiveness. *Grevillea robusta* was the most responsive but required an optimum near to 120g N/m³/month; two *Eucalyptus* species showed a smaller response than *G. robusta* but required an N optimum of 97g N/m³/month.