

NURSERY PRODUCTION IN ORANGE AND LOS ANGELES COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA

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Nursery production has grown to a high level in Orange and Los Angeles counties, California, despite the rapid urbanization. In contrast, many other types of agricultural production have been greatly reduced.

The dollar ornamental plant production figures for each county went over the 100 million dollar mark in 1979. Several major types of ornamental production are included in the 100 million figures, however, the major part of the production is outdoor container-grown woody ornamentals. This production in the two counties represents a major share of the container-grown woody ornamentals in California.

Both local use and out-of-state sales are important in the marketing of these products. The continued strong urban development in California and superior climate for outdoor production in comparison with many other areas in the United States has been a factor in the expansion of the industry. The ready availability of transportation, an adequate supply of labor and materials, and a highly favorable growing climate have all contributed to expansion of the industry.

Nursery size can vary from the small grower using one or two acres of land to those who grow on 100 or more acres. Nurseries are scattered throughout the basin. Many are located under the power company transmission lines, placing them at times in the middle of urban development. The larger sized nurseries are more often in the more outlying areas with several of them in the eastern part of Orange County.

With the long dry season, sprinkler irrigation is the rule for most of gallon-can container production areas with drip or tube irrigation increasingly being used for the larger-sized containers. The soil mix is typically light weight due to the advantage of handling and the reduction in weight for shipping. Shipping weight has become increasingly important with higher energy costs and their effect on transportation rates.

With the factors mentioned above, plus others, the Orange-Los Angeles County area has developed into one of the major areas for production of container grown plants. The expansion of nursery production has helped keep agriculture viable in a major urban area.