

Country Fresh Flowers For 2005



By Roger C. Styer

Over the last few months, I cannot tell you how many people have asked about how my field-grown summer cut flower business did. A lot of people must read my monthly column and are definitely interested in how my cut flower business is going. I am grateful for all the interest, and so I now feel compelled to let everyone know what the plans are for 2005. I put together an update on how 2004 went in the November 2004 *GPN* column. Looking back, it appears we are going to dwarf our efforts from last year with what we have planned for this year.

For 2005, my business, Country Fresh Flowers, will be almost tripling production from last year. We are adding another big local farmer's market, which gives us three farmer's markets per week. We will also be doing business with two big local florists, as well as setting up a subscription bouquet service for local

businesses and homeowners. I am confident we will have enough markets for all of the flowers we plan to grow. Now, if Mother Nature will just cooperate!

Our first planting is the week of April 18, which will include perennials and sweet peas. Our big planting is right after Mother's Day, and we have smaller plantings scheduled for every three weeks thereafter until July 11. That should give us enough flowers through the beginning of October, until Mother Nature gives us a good frost or freeze.

Besides the increase in the field plantings, we are going to grow Oriental and Asiatic lilies in crates in the greenhouse. We have eight varieties of each type. We are planning 50 bulbs per planting, with five plantings. That works out to 4,000 lilies for the first year. Hope they sell for top price!

We will buy a tube-transplanter to help plant through the black plastic mulch and control weeds between rows. We are also going to get a good hydraulic sprayer we can easily use in the field. As for hired help, my daughter Katie has agreed to work more than she did last year. Although she still would rather put bouquets together than cut in the field, I told her she has no choice but to help cut. I will hire another high school girl (my neighbor) who is the same age as my daughter. And my college girl who did an outstanding job for me last year, before heading off to college, will be returning. I will probably add another one or two part-time ladies to help through the season.

We will be doing more snaps, sunflowers, lisianthus, cosmos, zinnias and celosia than we did last year. In addition, we've included some perennials (some of which are first-year flowering): dahlias, trachelium, calendula and even

ornamental peppers (including Pumpkin on a Stick). We even have some flowering kale scheduled for after we get cool weather in the fall. Some of these items might not produce or sell very well, but we will definitely give them a chance. Consumers and florists are always looking for some different items to put into unique bouquets, so we want to be their local source. I want to make sure we produce quality flowers; cut them on time; treat them properly with floral preservatives; and present beautiful bouquets, bunches and single stems to our customers throughout the season.

That's a tall order, but I can't wait to get started! I can't believe it is only about one month before we start planting. I better start getting into good physical shape, as there is a lot of bending and stooping when transplanting and cutting in the field. But, I really love it!

Just to let you know...If you are planning on coming to Ball's Field Day around the end of July, come on out to my field to see what's happening. I will be around every day except Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. Those are the days I have farmer's markets. Our field is located at L&M Greenhouses in St. Charles, Ill. From Ball's Field Trials, take Route 38 west, go through Geneva, turn right on Randall Road, go north until you see L&M Greenhouses on the left side. Our cut flowers are behind the AAS demonstration gardens beside the greenhouses. I welcome you to stop by and browse to your heart's content. You might even want to take home a beautiful flower or two! 

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Cut Flower Crop List For 2005

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| Ageratum | Lilies, Asiatics and Orientals |
| Ammi Majus | Lisianthus, 5 colors |
| Calendula, 2 colors | Lobelia, 2 colors |
| Campanula, 3 colors | Lupine, mix |
| Celosia, 3 colors | Marigold |
| Cosmos, mix | Rudbeckia, 3 colors |
| Dahlia, at least 4 colors | Ornamental Pepper, 3 types |
| Delphinium, 3 colors | Salvia |
| Dianthus/Sweet William, mix | Snapdragons, 6 colors |
| Digitalis, mix | Sunflowers, 11 varieties |
| Echinacea | Sweet Pea, mixed |
| Flowering Kale, 2 colors | Trachelium, 4 colors |
| Liatris | Zinnia, mix |