

## World travel

It was the trip that took me in Delta's frequent flyer program to the highest level possible. Scary, it shows how much one travels to bring beauty to consumers. It not only took me over 150,000 status miles for this year, it also took me over 1.5 million status miles flown in the last 10 years.

This trip took me to Rome, Stuttgart, Nairobi, and Entebbe. I reported about Poinsettias in the November News Flash, and now I will report about my visits to our

farms in Kenya and Uganda.

The main focus of this issue will be on our production farms. I will show you how the stock looks and what it takes to deliver great URC.

There is lots to read in the December News Flash, so sit back, relax, and enjoy this issue.

Sincerely yours,  
Stefan Reiner



## Variety of the Month

**Christmas Feelings™ Red Cinnamon** is the and exciting addition to our best-selling Christmas Feelings series. It fits the series perfectly and enriches every program with its spectacular color. Imagine red, cranberry, and apricot tones mixed irregularly all over the plant.

## Kenya Plant Production (KPP)



In other words we got away from splitting crops between location but placed crops where they are growing the best. KPP is dry, on higher elevation and has cooler nights = perfect for Zonal and Ivy geraniums, perennials, and our cut flower program. Wagagai has a more tropical climate with warmer nights and became our spring annuals and poinsettia specialist.

Today KPP in Kenya produces almost all of our Zonal and Ivy geraniums, and when the currently in construction 3.7 ha extension is finished, for the 2010/11 season they will produce them all. The perennial program works well in exchange with geraniums, and our cut flower program runs year round.

Wagagai in Uganda has become our product specialist for poinsettia and spring annuals. Already in 2009 we

shipped all of our poinsettias worldwide from Uganda, and it was our best poinsettia season ever. Poinsettias work perfectly with our spring annuals program in a seasonal exchange. MiniFamous calibrachoa, Magadi lobelia, Zion osteospermum, and Trxi components are just some of the products shipping from Uganda.

What does that mean for you, the grower, our customer? First of all it ensures a uniform quality. When the entire crop is at one location, you know that cuttings will be in general very similar and can be rooted all together. Secondly and not less important, split shipments are significantly reduced. Week after week you will get a uniform quality in viewer shipments. Larger quantities per farm improve logistics as well, and this is another big advantage for you.

Now you probably ask yourself why I mentioned three farms but only spoke about two so far. Europe doesn't allow for Solanacea (Petunia and Calibrachoa in our case) to ship from outside into Europe. This is why we have a smaller farm for Solanacea production on Tenerife, one of the Spanish Canary Islands. All Petunia and Calibrachoa for Europe ship from this farm.



The next step was to improve quality, sanitation, and productivity. How can you do all that together? You may think this is not possible, but I tell you, it is. We took our old 0.5 ha production houses and connected three with each other. By using currently wasted space between the houses, we were able to make from three 0.5 ha houses a 1.7 ha production unit. At the same time we added huge entry areas (left) per production unit where staff has to follow a number of sanitation steps before entering a production unit. Now a larger number of staff members are able to enter without space issues and without time pressure. Each entry area has one control person assigned that checks entry procedures all day long. The larger production units reduce

traffic between different houses, significantly increasing sanitation. So now we increased our gross productivity per farm and sanitation, but what about quality and net productivity? The larger units have a much better and more stable climate. The units are not heating up or cooling down as fast and air flow is much better. This improved climate not only resulted in better quality but also in higher productivity per plant.

For the most expensive to produce product, zonal geraniums, we went a step further. We changed our crop management and are now producing another type of cutting. This cutting is not only better in quality, it also allows us to get more cuttings per plant, increasing productivity.

The left image below shows you our new cutting (left) and our old cutting (right) side by side. The new cutting has a larger stem, fewer internodes and therefore also less foliage. The image to the right shows the new cutting closer.

The new cutting roots fast, is less prone to yellowing during the first days, and allows for more cuttings per square meter in rooting.

In summary, yes it is possible to increase quality, sanitation, and productivity.

But all changes would not work if there is not a team to make it happen, and I must say that both teams, at KPP and Wagagai, are ready for it.





After reporting about our changes in general, let's talk more about KPP. The images to the left show you one of the 1.7 ha production units for geraniums. The cuttings I saw on these stock plants looked stunning, and I am looking forward to the upcoming season.

You have heard about Wagagai not only in the July 2007 NewsFlash issue but also in the September 2008 issue, the 2008 Greenhouse Grower Young Plant issue, and in our 2009 Poinsettia catalog. You learned that it takes much more to run such a farm than only producing cuttings. It brings a lot of social responsibilities with it.

The KPP farm team can reach 1,000 in peak, and this is like a huge family. The image to the left below shows you our clinic where a doctor and nurses take care of our staff and their family members. It will also treat minor injuries, but more importantly, it has also educational responsibilities about AIDS, HIV, Malaria, family planning, and much more.

The image to the right shows you our lunch area. The entire staff gets lunch every day.

A full stomach and healthy people go a long way in East Africa, and we are proud to be able to be part of it.

KPP just turned 10 years this summer, and I was planting our first crop in 1999 with a small team. Some of them are still there and are part of the management today. We have only one expat in Kenya, all other management is local and I am proud that I was part of it, even when only for a short time. Those two months were amongst the best in my life, and I have made friends for life.

But a farm in Kenya also has its challenges. We all hear about crime and security issues in Kenya, and this is a



concern. Our staff has to follow strict rules to stay safe.

Another issue is water. Availability and quality of water is an issue, and we had to make huge investments to secure both. Our water comes from a river that is actually quite stable even in a drought. However, this is Africa and nothing is sure. So we have a water reservoir (next page, left image) that can supply our farm for nine months. We are in the process of extending this to cover 12 months.

The water cleaning and disinfecting process is the pride of the farm, and the team enjoys explaining how it works to visitors (next page, right image). We are doing double what is required by USDA-APHIS, and our water is some of the cleanest in water in Kenya. I can't talk in detail about the process because it is quite complex and I guess also a bit secret. However, I can give you a general overview and show you some impressive images of equipment used.



The water from the reservoir comes first in smaller settlement pools. After the larger settlements are gone, it is filtered through a carbon filter. From there it goes through our UV system (left image above) and through a second much finer filter. Finally it is treated with chlorine and ends up in our rest tanks where it has to rest until it can be used. After tanks are cleared and water is ready to use, it is pumped (right image above) to our fertilizer station (right image below) and finally is distributed via our valves (left image below) to the zones in each production area. Every time I walk this process, not only the process impresses me but the sheer size of equipment used and needed. Yes, our farm in Kenya is ready for the coming season and seasons to come. I could write so much more about what I saw, but I am already on page four and haven't reported about Wagagai much yet.



## Wagagai, Uganda



You have heard in the past about Wagagai. This time I will focus on the crop and update you as to how it looks. I mentioned the general changes we did in our supply of URC, and like KPP we also changed crop management in Wagagai as well. In general we are growing dryer (using vans, opening the sides more, watering less) but at the same time using more shade, or I should say a more stable shade color outside, not so prone to the daily heavy rain. The result is a better cutting quality overall.

The image to the left shows you our Lobelia Magadi™ Blue stock. Magadi™ Lobelia are one of our fastest-growing product lines, and this success is a combination of excellent genetics and great cutting quality.

Wagagai produces our entire spring annuals program from A to Z. Only geraniums are in Kenya.

Stock looks great, cuttings even better, and we are ready for the season. The images below show you from left to right Bidens, Verbena, Bracteantha, and Heliotrope. The three largest crops at Wagagai are Osteospermum (FlowerPower™ and Zion™), NGI (ColorPower™), and MiniFamous™ Calibrachoa. They are a powerhouse when it comes to these



three crops. The quality and uniformity of these three crops produced by Wagagai is exceptional. The images below show you part of the *Osteospermum* stock, a shot into the NGI stock, and a close-up of our *Calibrachoa* stock. Looking at it from the distance, I must say Selecta took the next step and now it is time to deliver. The 2009/10 season is just getting started, so please give us feedback about the product we ship. It is all about you, the grower customer.



## Selecta's 2010 semi-commercial trial variety



Our second 2010 semi-commercial trial variety is **SK 73**. SK 73 is a very early season variety with a low-medium vigor, oak-shaped foliage, true red color, and excellent branching. It has a round plant habit but branches are nicely upright. It has a 7-week response time and finishes natural day around November 10 - 17. First cool crop trials have been looking very promising. The plants are strong, and overall the plant is clean inside. Where SK 72, introduced last month, goes in the direction of Orion™/Early Orion™ and Prestige™ (with earlier finish), SK 73 is more in the Red Elf™ and Advent Red™ category. A great plant for small to medium-sized pots, baskets, and table tops. The color and look give it great consumer appeal.

## Christmas Carol - the perfect cool-crop series



NG Heimos, Saint Louis, grew a cool-finish Christmas Carol crop this year. They filled an entire house with it, growing about 10,000 6-inch pots using the three colors available. Beginning October (10/12) they grew the crop at 57 F night, 60 F day with vents set at 65 F. Later they lowered it even further to 55 F night, 58 F day with vents set at 63 F. However, it was a very dark and rainy fall. Size of the plants was good, but color came slower than expected, so they raised the temperature beginning November (11/12) to 58 F night, 63 F day with vents set at 68 F. After just seven days the crop started to color in rather quickly. During a usual fall with more light and higher day temperatures they would probably not have needed to warm up the crop, but in this situation, it was the right thing to do. The images are from week 47, and the crop was ready to go. It was at its peak right for Thanksgiving.

Christmas Carol is a series that works the best as a cool-crop. Grown traditionally, plants will stretch, finish very early, and might be on the softer side.



### Selecta News

It is Poinsettia time, not only because you are shipping your last crop, but because now is already the best time to think about 2010. You can view our catalog on-line by visiting <http://firstclassplants.com/FCP/k/poin/> and by going to our website [firstclassplants.com](http://firstclassplants.com) where you will find detailed variety and crop information.

Check out production images for most varieties showing you how they look at a grower in different sizes and formats. Take advantage of a huge inventory for Selecta Poinsettias shipping from our sole location worldwide in Uganda.

If you are new to Selecta Poinsettias, then I recommend starting with the Christmas Feelings series as your mid-season choice. It is perfect for 4- to 6-inch production, tricolor pots, and with a little more growing time, you will get great 8-inch plants as well.



Selecta First Class, Inc.  
P.O. Box 231306  
Encinitas, CA 92023-1306  
800-955 5644

<http://firstclassplants.com>