

March already!

It is March already and soon we will have April, the start of spring sales. April and May will be very important this year. Not that they are not always important, but I think under the current circumstances, even more than ever. Most decisive will be the weather, more than the economy. I am carefully optimistic and think we should fill our retail areas with the best quality plants ever and keep them looking good. Consumers will come, and they will buy if we make sure our products are looking great.

New varieties will help as well, and good POP displays will help making the sale. This is the perfect bridge to Pack Trials coming up later this months. Be there and get ideas for 2009 and 2010.

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

Sincerely yours,
Stefan Reiner



Variety of the Month

SuperTrouper™ Pink+White is all new for 2009/10, and the new Pot Carnation season is about to start. Availability starts in week 27 (July), and cuttings will ship from Canada again. We are adding a total of five new varieties, offering you a selection of 15 unique colors.

Selecta genetics are looking good

February and March are two busy months with traveling to clients in the U.S. and Canada. I visited a number of clients and saw Selecta cuttings in rooting, rooted, planted, and almost ready for shipping. Overall our clients were happy with Selecta's supply so far. A couple hick-ups here and there, but overall I was happy with what I saw.

I did see a lot of Selecta Osteospermum from close-to-finished (right), well rooted in the pot (below), all the way to URC in rooting. This is one of our key crops with not only great varieties but outstanding URC quality from our farm in Uganda. We are adding a number of exciting new colors to our assortment for 2009/10.



The images on this page show some of our core products with origin in Uganda. Starting at the top right clockwise you see Petunia, Calibrachoa, Verbena, Begonia Bonfire® and Bellfire®, and Osteospermum.

Comments I heard about our cuttings were about the good overall size and habit of cuttings, the uniformity, the ease of rooting, the high % of cuttings that are rooting, the color of cuttings, and their overall rooting performance. Comments about improvements we need to work on were mostly about counting issues in bags (not enough in one and too many in the other bag), some cosmetic upgrades for our packing list, and packaging for those really cold days, especially for more sensitive crops like NGI.

One of the more difficult crops for our rooting partners was Begonia boliviensis. I saw excellent results, but I also saw results that were not satisfactory. Besides the occasional shipping damage (cold or heat), most challenges are related to mist and environment. The worst results I saw were when the crop was in a misting group with other crops. The best results I saw were when mist was cut to almost nothing, using remay (cheese cloth) for evaporation protection, and growers adapted to it by paying attention to the details (see more next page).

A challenging crop was Zonal geraniums shipping from Uganda. We had difficulties with our freight partners, and delays during shipping resulted in yellowing of cuttings



during the first days in rooting. We decided to move our geranium stock for North America for 2009/10 to Kenya, improving our freight options to North America significantly. Kenya is our largest farm and focusses almost entirely on geraniums.

Overall our season was a good one so far. With a very low claim rate, the fact that we had a delay after losing part of our week 02 shipment in transit (which we almost caught up entirely in week 04), and the overall excellent availability, I would even call it a very good season with room for improvements.

You are very welcome to send me comments, suggestions, and anything on your mind concerning this supply season by sending me an Email: s.reiner@firstclassplants.com

Begonia success stories



Niki Evans, the grower at Meadowlands Horticultural in Vancouver, B.C., has achieved great results rooting *Begonia boliviensis*. The first and most important secret to her success is keeping the foliage dry and paying attention to details. She covers her wire-mesh tables with perforated strawberry plastic, reducing airflow and stress (as seen in the lower right image). This is critical in order to cut mist. She makes sure that liners are well moistened before sticking. She dips all of the cuttings in Chipco for 1 minute before sticking (submerges them). She is using a rooting hormone to speed up rooting. After sticking she covers the crop with remay (cheese cloth) and hand mists over the cloth when needed. The image top left shows the covered crop. The image top right shows the week 05 planting (was planted Wednesday) on Friday afternoon. Notice how dry the foliage is. When necessary and to avoid drying out of media, she waters the crop. However, mist is only applied by hand over the cloth and only when absolutely necessary. Flagger cuttings are not a bad thing for this type of Begonia. Two days after sticking, she sprays the cutting with Daconil or Chipco and repeats the treatment 10 to 14 days later. The lower left image shows a two-week-old crop (right) and a three-week-old crop (left). After rooting she keeps the liners on the dry side to better control



stretch. She pinches Bellfire® as soon as possible and at the correct node. She ensures that the correct day length is given (using HID lights) and keeps the temperature in the desired range. When hardening the liners, she makes sure not to lower the temperature too low, keeping them well fed with N, and actively growing, avoiding waterlogged plants. The image to the left shows a liner ready to be shipped the next week. Notice the short inter-nodes and the active side-shoot development - all signs for a ready-to-grow liner.

I have seen nice Begonia liners at other customers as well like at Welby, Colonial Florists, and Cumberland Trials. All have slightly different ways to root them, but they are all keeping the foliage as dry as possible. It can be done!

Yes! Geraniums

I do know that we have customers who are not happy with the geranium cuttings they got this season. Some had one shipment not working out, others more than one. After traveling to a number of clients, I can say that overall a large number of clients have been receiving good cuttings, especially with origin in Kenya and Tenerife (Canary Islands - licensed for Canada only).

The images below show you a nice, large rooted crop with cuttings from Kenya, and the image to the right shows you a potted crop of Moonlight™ Geraniums from Uganda early in the season. The early season Uganda shipments worked out quite well. Why am I writing about it? I wanted to make sure you all see that we are shipping good geranium quality overall and that we are working on the bugs to make it flawless for all of our clients.

Selecta offers some of the best geranium genetics available and is one of the largest suppliers in the world. With moving the crop to Kenya for the next season and new flight options from Kenya to the U.S. starting this summer, Selecta's geranium supply will improve. Not to forget our new world-wide availability starting with the 2009/10 season. Thank you for your continuing support.



TrixiLiner™ update



Our new TrixiLiner™ program has been a huge success so far. Our rooting stations together with our tech support have been able to develop a protocol for rooting highest quality with very low losses. The image to the left shows you three different recipes as liner ready to ship (35 mm cell). The 72-cell format forces the plants to grow upright, making handling of the liners totally easy. Even at planting lines, staff can keep up the speed planting TrixiLiners™. The image all the way at the bottom shows TrixiLiner™ on the rooting bench the week before shipping.



The image below the liners shows Trixi™ Cotton Candy, one of the favorite mixes so far.

We used liners from our TrixiLiner™ production and planted baskets ourselves. We planted them in week 02, and the images below are from week 08. We used 4 TrixiLiner™ per basket. We have not pinched them again but applied one low concentration PGR application. The baskets have been moved to a colder house in week 09.

For 2009/10 we will improve three of our existing recipes and we will add five new ones.

TrixiLiner™ makes sense, and if you are not convinced yet then make sure to contact us for the two info sheets we offer: 'Dollars & Sense' and the tech sheet.



Trixi™ Spring Valley



Trixi™ Twinkle Star



Trixi™ Ayers Rock



It wouldn't be a NewsFlash if . . .



. . . I wouldn't write about hiking :-).

It is the time of the year when I finalize all my hiking plans for summer, as permits need to be applied for in many areas in California. This summer my wife and I will hike the Rae Lakes Loop in Kings Canyon National Park (4 days / 3 nights) and the Mineral King to Little Five Lakes loop in Sequoia National Park (4 days / 3 nights). I hiked the Rae Lakes loop two years ago, but my wife wasn't able to join then. In August we will stay in Yosemite's Tuolumne Meadows for a week and continue our family tradition we started 5 years ago. Every summer we spend a week in Yosemite camping and hiking. This summer's trip to Yosemite will be special, as we will take our two kids backpacking for the first time. Laura (right) will walk herself, and Marcel will join us in his favorite carrier. We will take it easy and hike from Tenaya Lake to May Lake the first day, to Glen Aulin the second day, and back to Tuolumne Meadows the third day. A friend will join us so weight can be split easier among the adults.



We started to walk and hike more with Laura lately, and she is doing very well.

Just last weekend we took her on a 4-mile hike and she finished! Early January she snowshoed for her first time and she made 3 miles on her own (in deep snow). She is moving as long as fun and adventure are involved.

The images show Fin Dome seen from the valley just before Rae Lakes (top left), Tuolumne River just before heading down to Glen Aulin (top right), and Laura hiking. Slowly but surly I am getting back to my training routine but haven't really picked up speed yet - too many excuses for getting up early ;-). Stay tuned for reports this summer.

Selecta News

We are in the middle of selecting our new TrixiLiner™ recipes, and we have a couple great new mixes. One of my favorites is Trixi™ Liberty Bell (image) in red, white, and blue.

It is a mix of Fame™ Fire evol., Lascar™ White evol., and MiniFamous™ Compact Dark Blue. The Petunia and the Verbena are new varieties for 2009/10, and the Calibrachoa is one of our best-selling varieties overall. All three are extremely early and in full flower in CA since week 08. All three have a low and mounding vigor, creating a stunning mix. This mix works in pots, gallons, and baskets and flowers early enough for early sales in the South. By the way, all improvements of existing recipes are focusing on early flowering especially with Verbena and Petunia.



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