

own cuttings and the same varieties from others) which reduced our percentage, but many lots rooted about 100%. This year we are not rooting the difficult varieties in bands but will transplant them after they are rooted.

MODERATOR CURTIS: The next rhododendron grower-propagator on the program is Mr. Ranville Hart. Mr. Hart lives in Mt. Vernon, Washington. Mr. Hart.

## THE PROPAGATION OF RHODODENDRONS

RANVILLE HART

*Mount Vernon, Washington*

I propagate my rhododendrons in a 100 by 25 ft. glass-house which is equipped with hot water heat. The pipes are located in the air beneath the benches. The temperature is kept at 75°F in the pot zone by thermostatic control. There is no top heat. One 42" two-speed fan provides forced air ventilation.

The benches are made of concrete slabs with a six inch sides. They are skirted with polyethylene. Monarch spray nozzles with a 5-ft. coverage set four feet apart adequately provide controlled mist. They are controlled by a clock with a 10 second every 5 minute cycle but are shut off nights and rainy days. Every few days I "spot water" to cover the dry areas.

I use square peat pots set on 1/2" of sand — 3" for standard varieties and 2 1/4" for dwarfs — firmly filled with a medium of 50% coarse sand and 50% peat by volume. These pots are well-watered after they are set and the heat is turned on before I begin taking cuttings.

I make my cuttings during the first part of November. I have tried taking cuttings earlier but have had best success with the early November ones. The cuttings are three inches long and have a heavy double wound. I quick-dip them in Jiffy Grow — one part per ten parts water — as I stick them in the bench. This is done as quickly as possible to prevent loss of moisture. I water them in immediately.

The cuttings are well-rooted by the first of May and are ready to be set out. I don't move them until I transplant them into the lathhouse. I had 95% rooting this past year using fifty varieties.

For greenhouse sanitation I have had success by leaving the benches open in summer and using Captan dust to control fungi if any appears during the winter.

I grow the plants in the lathhouse one year, then at least two years in the field, before sale. The year-old liners are planted in beds in sandy loam soil, sprayed with Casoron immediately, then mulched with two inches of alder sawdust.

MODERATOR CURTIS: In the Portland area there are a great many rhododendrons grown and the next man to speak, I would say, came by his work honestly. His father was one of the early experts in growing rhododendrons from cuttings. In fact, I think he was one of the first men to root rhododendron cuttings. So Ted had real good early training, and he is following in his father's footsteps and is doing the same good job his father did. It is a great pleasure to introduce Ted Van Veen.

### SELECTING RHODODENDRON CUTTINGS

TED VAN VEEN  
*Van Veen Nursery*  
*Portland, Oregon*

Today the nurseryman is greatly aware of the economic importance of increasing his production and reducing his costs in order to maintain a reasonable profit margin. As a commercial grower, our nursery is ever mindful of this premise as a necessity for survival. Proper selection of cuttings can be a decisive profit maker. I come with no profound message, no new scientific discoveries, or great panacea to all rhododendron problems. The selection of cuttings still is more of an art than a science. But scientific research has been, and will continue to be, a tremendous guide for all of us. Through this discussion, I hope to share with you the methods we use in our nursery for taking cuttings. Whether you agree or disagree with these procedures is not important. Of more significance, it is an opportunity for you to add to your storehouse of information, correlate these experiences with your own, and possibly enable you to reach some new conclusions which will help the profit picture of your own operation.

Consideration must be given to the objectives of the propagator. As a large producer of rhododendrons exclusively, our aims could be quite different from someone else's. Our situation becomes complex because we carry a wide selection of varieties for varying purposes. However, in general, our goal for the major commercial varieties is to produce quality rooted cuttings quickly — cuttings which will result in healthy, multi-branched plants in the spring. And of great importance is a substantial, well-attached root ball — so necessary for the eventual survival of the plant.

Well established stock plants are essential for quality rhododendron production. Optimum rooting in the shortest time cannot be attained by field stripping production plants because of different treatments. The high nitrogen content in field plants, being pushed along for best possible growth and bud set, is not conducive to fast and high rooting percentages. And, of course, in spite of the fact that they root more easily, juvenile cuttings from small plants cannot be successfully used because they will not result in top quality stock.