

# Scheduling propagation year round<sup>©</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

Baucom's Nursery is a company in North Carolina that grows a diverse product line. We grow annuals, poinsettias, mums, cactus, ornamentals, Easter lilies, roses, azaleas, pansies, and an assortment of other plants. It is a tremendous challenge to schedule these plants in propagation with our objective to have them saleable at the optimum time. We propagate from cuttings every week of the year. Below is a list crops propagated on a monthly basis.

- January - Leyland Cypress (*Cupressus × leylandii*), arborvitae (*Thuja*), annuals
- February – finish winter shrubs, annuals
- March – annuals
- April – annuals, cactus
- May – annuals, mums, ornamentals
- June – mums, poinsettias, ornamentals
- July – mums, poinsettias, ornaments
- August – mums, poinsettias, ornamentals
- September – ornamentals
- October – ornamentals
- November – ornamentals
- December – ornamentals and spring annuals

## ORNAMENTAL PROPAGATION

We use a homemade formula in January or February to establish our ornamental schedule for the year:

- We look at our sales history over the past four years. Is there a trend? Is our sales history remaining the same, declining or increasing?
- What is our current saleable inventory? What is available for current sales and what inventory is growing for the future?
- We seek communication from our sales staff. Through their interactions with our customers, they are able to obtain information regarding our future sales.
- During spring it is important to track sales and to have an understanding of when the sales occurred. If there was a shortage, did it occur early or later in the spring? This helps to determine plant numbers for the propagation season.
- What is our current liner inventory?
- The propagation list established in February may be evaluated in June or July and numbers adjusted according to spring sales.

The majority of our liners are grown in a 21-cell pack and many are planted with two cuttings per cell. The liners are overwintered in a heated greenhouse, attempting to maintain above 0°C (32°F). In North Carolina, in our area, around mid-April we look at the long range weather forecast and if it is favorable, we begin planting. Our program is to plant liners straight into a 3-gal container.

## POINSETTIA PROPAGATION

In 2016, we stuck 110,000 poinsettia cuttings. Our sales staff provides data that is helpful in determining numbers and colors. This year our color percentage is 80% red, 12% white, 4% pink and 4% assorted. Scheduling is important so that we have adequate color to be shipped into stores. We want our sales season to be from the week of Thanksgiving and hopefully all of our plants are in the stores by the 20<sup>th</sup> of December. In recent years, our

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customers have demanded poinsettias showing good color on what they call “Black Friday.” We needed a variety that would color up naturally for that date. We grow three different red poinsettia cultivars that will color up at different times. We grow *Euphorbia pulcherrima* ‘Premium Red’ for Black Friday, ‘Protégé Red’ would be the next to color and the last red to color would be ‘Prestige Red’. Our scheduling also includes our first plant growth regulator (PGR) which is applied d propagation. We use B-NINE and Cycocel.

#### **MUM PROPAGATION**

In 2016 we stuck 200,000 mum cuttings. We completed our mum scheduling in terms of color, number and flower dates the same way as with our poinsettias, by communicating with our sales staff. Our color ratio for mums this year was 50% yellow, 15% red, 15% purple, 10% orange and 10% white. Here is an example for a mum schedule for a 15-cm (6-in.) containers, with one cutting per pot direct stuck during propagation. We allow 14-16 days from the time the cutting is stuck until it is completely weaned off the mist. Under natural conditions, we then allow 8 weeks until the 6 in. mum has flowered.

If we direct stick 3 cuttings in an 30-cm (8 in) pot, we normally add 2-3 weeks longer for flowering.

Our formula for scheduling and growing after propagation is not foolproof, but I hope this has been helpful and informative as you schedule in your work.