



Herbaceous Perennial Container Production

--considerations, resources

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Questions

- What is the market? Who are the buyers?
 - wholesale: pot size varies with buyer
 - landscapers: larger plants usually
 - consumers: smaller plants usually (varies with market), service, information, price? (price conscious best left to mass markets)
 - collectors: unusual, specific groups/genera
- What type of business do you want? Have?
 - retail: people oriented, less production, more finished material
 - wholesale: more plant oriented, propagation/production/both
 - diverse with other aspects (landscaping): production for own use, or if retail, or not depending on focus
- When will the plants be grown and sold?
 - This will depend on: type of business (available time), labor
 - This will determine: type of production, if any
- Location constraints?
 - Space for production, in greenhouse or nursery?
 - Climate, such as overwintering needs in north
 - Relation to market, wholesale or retail

Types of Production—Field

- More used in past, specialty markets such as dig-your-own or custom dug, small
- Good for larger materials such as landscaping
- Preferred by many growers for crops such as daylilies, peonies
- Bare root production

Types of Production—Containers

- Most common
- Easier to handle than field, less labor, more adaptable to mechanization
- More control over culture, pests/disease, weeds
- Available all during season
- Greenhouse or nursery

Greenhouse or Nursery?

- Greenhouse
 - if exists already, production system focus for potted crops and bedding
 - propagation, more demanding crops

- Nursery
 - if no greenhouse, less structural costs
 - if greenhouse space for higher value crops
 - less demanding crops

Production begins with:

- Plugs: small plants generally from seeds, 30-300 or more per tray
 - better adapted to greenhouse production (seeding, transplanting)
 - may be easier to buy in difficult species (germination, vernalization)
 - often less choice, not possible with many cultivars
- Liners: generally vegetative, often larger cells (30-70 per tray)
 - need specialized facilities to produce (eg stock beds)
 - often better suited to nurseries
 - more choices, may be more “true” to type
 - often less time to bloom
- Divisions: generally bought in, or smaller specialty nurseries, some genera as *Iris*, *Hemerocallis* (more details in propagation leaflets, resources)

Propagation options:

- buy in all, or propagate all
- buy in easier, propagate harder
- buy in harder to propagate (vernalize), start easier on site

Buying in liners—considerations

- cost: saves time, labor and facilities but more costly if these available
- culture indexing: make sure material is indexed or free of disease
- timing: depends on operation, schedules with other crops
 - late summer—pot, overwinter (vernalize) 28-41F (-2 to 5C) or outdoors
 - fall—overwinter covered
 - early spring—pot and finish for spring, force into bloom?
 - spring—pot and finish for summer sales, conflicts if also selling spring annuals
- size of plant/rooted cutting: depends on type of operation, schedules, space, other crops, cost, finishing size
 - same choices as for propagation, 16-128 cells per tray, often 30/50/70/90 or similar
- unrooted cuttings: source (domestic or offshore): offshore may take several days longer, possibly decreasing quality

Resources

- Herbaceous Perennial Production, Perry, NRAES publ.
- Perennial Solutions, a Grower’s Guide to Perennial Production, Ball Publ.
- Ball Perennial Manual, Nau, Ball. Publ.
- Ball Redbook, and other publications, Ball publ.
- Seed catalogs, web sites
- Perry’s Perennial Pages (<http://www.uvm.edu/~pass/perry/>)
- Perennial Plant Association, 3383 Schirtzinger Rd, Hilliard OH 43026, www.perennialplant.org