

# GROWERTALKS

## Cover Story

4/28/2017

## Introducing "Grower Talks"

*Jennifer Zurko*

### Timeliness

Lack of timeliness in conducting the everyday affairs of business is responsible for 75% of greenhouse failures. This rather broad statement was recently made by a prominent and conservative grower. As we try to analyze this, we begin to realize that at least there is something to it. When an hour late for an appointment, you are fortunate if it means nothing but a loss of somebody's time. And what a difference in the credit standing between your customers who do and who do not meet their bills timely, for credit sometimes becomes a deciding factor. But where timeliness is most important in greenhouse operations is in the starting of crops or sowing of seed. This and the next page of "Grower Talks" will briefly remind you of crops that should be started during the current month, particularly such as are grown from seed.

There is probably less seed sown during May than in any month of the year. May is a harvest month for nearly all crops, and is, therefore, a most important season for making notes on the strong and weak points of varieties.

**Snapdragons.** There are some Snaps sown this month for next winter's crop. We should hardly recommend this early date south of our latitude, for they would be exposed to too much heat that tends to weaken young stock making it susceptible to rust. Even in this section we have seen young stock in July hardened in pots and covered with rust. But this should not happen if kept growing. The advantages of a late May sowing are, favorable season for seed germination and stronger 3 to 4 in. plants to bench around Aug. 1st. This means coming in with a crop after frost, a time when something besides Mums is wanted. On a forward page will be found some notes on varieties.

**Obconica Primula.** Strong Easter plants can be produced from a sowing this month. A lot of growers fail with this seed even when supplied them in sealed tubes. Its germ is not, like that of a single Petunia, especially vigorous. For this reason we believe it easily decays if kept quite wet and old or unsterilized soil used. Material used should be quite sandy to insure against its being kept too wet. If the surface soil gets a bit dry as the seeds swell or sprout, the germ perishes quickly; but the other extreme, we believe, is also responsible for frequent losses. It is a mistake to refer to Obconicas as poisonous. Contact with them results in skin irritation to some people, but it is an injustice to this, the finest class of Primulas, to

even mention "poison" in connection with them. If we are not more discreet in the use of this disagreeable word, we might find it mistakenly associated with some other flowers.



**Larkspur.** In this section a final outdoor sowing is made this month. If growing conditions should become unfavorable,—high temperatures, lack of moisture,—this month's sowing will be forced into flower on rather short stems, but during late June any retail business uses Larkspur to advantage, tho it isn't long-stemmed. With normal weather a very nice crop of outdoor Larkspur can be had from a sowing this month, especially if the soil is deep, enriched and watered as needed. Anyone who has sown much of this seed knows how uncertain it is. It is probable that two year old seed is sometimes supplied, and it certainly should not be for even fresh seed will sometimes fail for reasons hard to explain. But it is definitely known that it will not come in a steady

temperature of 65-70o; 50-60o brings it right along. We once made a June sowing that no amount of watering would germinate a seed of until, after lying in the hot soil all summer, it came 100% with September rains and cooler weather. So, better make this month's sowing the final one.

**Phlox.** Do you know that the tall or Grandiflora class makes bright and useful summer cutting material? It shatters too easily for shipping, but is just the thing for a retail grower. The following varieties are excellent for cut flowers: Leopoldi, Rosea, Chamois Rose, Carnea; and for an excellent mixture, Art Shades.

**Celosia.** Last season we failed to get a good indoor stand of this for the trial ground and sowed it direct late this month, where the same seed germinated perfectly. The dwarf Plumosa varieties Golden and Fiery Feather make a gorgeous border or dwarf hedge after mid-August.

**Kochia.** Another hedge plant that should be sown direct this month and makes a refreshing green 3 to 4 ft. hedge. The variety Trichophylla becomes flaming red late in summer. Childsii remains beautiful green.

**Chinese Primula.** For strong 4 and 5 in. plants at Christmas, sow early this month. By late July they should be good 2¼ in. ready for 3's. Flowers of this class shatter easily, so they are not liked for shipping, but retail growers should find them valuable considering the prejudice in some quarters against the irritating nature of Obconicas. The complete range of colors available in this class is increasing interest in them. Fine indeed are Dazzler, orange red; Chiswick Red; Coerulea, light blue; Rose Queen, carmine rose; Duchess, white rose center. If but a limited number are grown, mixtures are generally preferred.



**Exacum Affine.** If sown at this time, it can be grown into good 3 to 4 in. pot plants by fall. Because of their continuous flowering habit and delightful fragrance, they meet with some favor as a house plant. The new variety Atrocoeruleum is darker and, therefore, more attractive than Affine.

**Gypsophila Elegans.** Sow this outdoors along with Larkspur. It is always useful in connection with any inexpensive cut flower work thru the summer. To maintain the supply, you better make a sowing early and late in the month. Covent Garden Market's the variety generally preferred.

## What Is A Bedding Plant?

We have found Double Petunias ideal bedding plants, but authorities have ruled otherwise, so we wonder if we are to stand corrected or where do we stand? This is really not a joke, tho it might seem so to some.

A committee of National Flower Show Judges at Milwaukee ruled out, among the College exhibits, a 99% perfect entry of Double Petunias on the ground that they could not be classed as bedding plants! True, they are ideal as pot plants—so are Geraniums and Coleus. But, along with this, when Double Petunias are planted out, they not only grow as strong as the wildest singles but flower profusely, in fact, we have always considered them the aristocrats among the bedding Petunias. But we are open to conviction, and we wonder what the opinion or experience of our readers might be.

## Snaps--Notes On Varieties

Improvement in any class of plants is carried on most successfully where they are at their best. Highly favorable conditions seem to bring out characters or fine colors that are ordinarily missed. This explains the greenhouse origin of our cut flower Calendula. We do not recall one variety of forcing Snaps that did not come from somebody's greenhouse

An encouraging point about most of the new varieties coming along is that in one way or another or for some locality or market they are better and are doing their part to increase the total value of our business. Some of the most striking improvements are notes in the semi-double form. C.H. Lothrop of Lexington, Massachusetts has a bright rose pink in this that is really captivating in color and form. But all of this class are limited by the necessity of propagating thru cuttings. The check they receive thru this is frequently followed by rust. Seedlings under the same conditions but not getting this check grow along unaffected. The apricot rose colored Miriam Helene we find will produce some seed if selfed or self pollinated. The resulting seedlings will come 100% true and with greater vigor than will the asexual propagation. There is a bright future in this class for good, patient growers. Schatzi Kupfer is a real spring prize winner that Mr. Kupfer tells us can only be propagated thru cuttings. It seems clearly to be at its finest in spring, which means planting after Mums and growing cold. A variety must have outstanding merit to unfailingly carry off blue ribbons as does this apricot or peach colored Schatzi.

Most growers get on very well with Lucky Strike for a white, but during mid-winter in deep beds it does make a lot of grassy and heavy growth that doesn't make for a profitable crop. A raised bed gives more uniform results. The new White Wonder promises to improve the weak points of Lucky Strike—no question about its doing so in color, which is as pure white thruout as Captor. We still believe Captor to be a good white and will find a place when seed is offered that will grow. It is surprising to note White Rock still being called for. Is it possible this is because it is priced at 50c and Lucky Strike at \$1.00, wouldn't that be penny wise?

All points considered, we believe Yellow Cheviot Maid should head its color class. Having a little more color is the only way it improves Ceylon Court; the free flowering habit of the latter might make up for its lighter color with some, but we have noted them growing under identical conditions and we prefer Yellow Cheviot. Planted early so the growth gets well set before winter, Coates' Yellow, on a raised bed, is easily the winner for color. But, like Lucky Strike, it makes an unprofitably strong growth if given a chance to do so. So avoid deep ground beds for either. Cheviot Maid Supreme remains the best all-around, mid-winter pink; fairly early, free,

and the right shade of rose pink. What more can be asked for? But for a shade darker, Rose Queen is very effective; not quite so early flowering, but this is overcome with early planting. For a lighter shade than either of the above, New Cincinnati is exceedingly fine; a beautiful light rose pink and long-stemmed. The new La France, coming out this season, gives us a yet lighter shade. According to an exhibit of it at Milwaukee, it is very choice, but we can, of course, say nothing of its habit. Daybreak is another light, Briarcliff rose pink shade that some are enthusiastic about. We find it belongs in the second early class, is long-stemmed, and choice in color. Along the orange-bronze, Afterglow still carries off blue ribbons—nothing better. But there are several noteworthy lighter shades. Among them Miss Wooster is outstanding, especially for earliness. New Deal is yet earlier, longer stemmed too than might be expected, unless the growth is checked or hardened, in which case it is worthlessly short-stemmed. New Deal is a valuable early, but you must keep it going. Sun Tan is another early bronze. Use these early types for later planting. Of the three above early varieties we prefer Miss Wooster.

Lavender is a choice Snap color and will be more popular when we get a variety that comes reasonably true to color. This is promised in the new “Orchid” to be released this season by O.O. Schrock, the originator of Velvet Beauty. Judging by the flowers we have seen of “Orchid,” we believe it is wanted. Also, the growth, we are told, is more really winter flowering. Velvet Beauty has done its part in adding color variation to early Snaps. It is really striking and shouldn’t be missed by retail growers. The rose-orange combination in Terry’s Surprise is striking and provides a real variation, but its grassy growth during winter, especially in ground beds, should leave it out of early plantings. It is fine for spring flowering.

## **The Future**

The color range in the winter class is becoming quite as complete as is that of the late or originals, in fact, are there any late ones to compare with the color depth and brightness of Rose Queen, Terry’s Surprise, or the light rose of New Cincinnati? There is every reason to expect the forcing kinds to further extend the range of cut flower shades. Next season will see the introduction of at least several distinctly original colors. One is Marie Louise, a light salmon shaded pink from George H. Raasch of Hoopeston, Ill. The other is what we should describe as a glorified “Afterglow,” the bronze being deep and striking. Fred Windmiller of Columbus, Ohio has been working along quietly for a number of years improving strains of rose and bronze shades that are going to set a high standard in winter Snaps. Considering their adaptability, comparative ease of culture, and color possibilities, we insist the future of Winter Snaps is very bright.

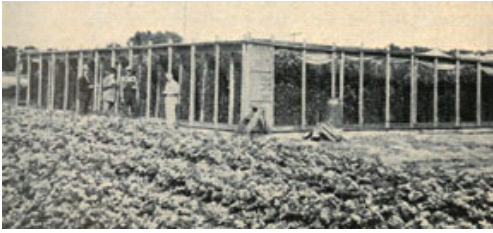
## **Rust Proof Strains**

There are several reasons why these vitalized strains are not available in the forcing varieties. Considerable time is needed to work over them, especially if they are to be turned out as true to color as required for forcing purposes. Also, improved varieties are showing up in such a bewildering array that it would be difficult for the California wizards to keep up with them. Furthermore, the Eastern seaboard, where fogs are prevalent, seems to be the only section that Rust Proof Strains would be in much demand. We have little trouble with rust in the drier atmosphere of the middle west. But the new frilled, semi-double types that must be propagated thru cuttings do offer worthwhile possibilities for rust proof development.

## **Floriculture In Florida**

In motoring to Florida we may not find the “eternal youth” that Ponce de Leon was after, but a greenhouse man will meet with much of professional interest, as well as recreation. Growing conditions are so different

that when a northerner attempts to get established down here, he must start all over again. The observing traveler in Europe picks up much cultural information of value, but down here our cultural practices have no ordinary application. Florida conditions are highly interesting, and a law unto themselves.



*Pictured: Joe Leinhart (2nd from right) demonstrates what can be done with early Peas in Florida, even in an off year. Celery in the foreground.*

Warm temperature plants flourish in the southern end of the state with a tropical splendor and naturally are the classes that have a large future here: but such lines as Peas, Snapdragons, and Calendula are something different as far as competition with the real North is concerned. Yet a prosperous business is carried on in these classes of stock, but it is confined to tourists and near-by northern centers; and the prices they get leads us to believe that these lines are profitable as well as permanent. The past unusually mild winter has been felt even down here to the extent of being almost disastrous, especially on Peas. About Macon, Georgia they have had no more than a light freeze all winter, and this unusual condition has thrown a lot of Easter stock out of line. Stocks are practically all blind in Florida this year, which happens down here three seasons out of four with this crop,—very fine tho when favored with moderate temperatures. Snapdragons are noted everywhere. The early or winter kinds are generally used, the regular or original class coming in too late. Strangely enough, rust does not affect them until late in the season when the plants are cut down and weakened. Because of high temperatures when seed is sown, attempts have been made to get young Snapdragons from the north. Moving down here, of course, gives them a check, and this sometimes results in rust. Growers here should know that seed is generally sown in the north early in July and carried through two months of higher temperatures than this section is liable to. When we let young stock get hardened in small pots or become stunted by carrying them too dry, rust frequently gets it. Unchecked growth is the important point. Another cut flower that is more popular down here than with us is the Stulb perennial Ageratum, large, bright, blue, long-stemmed, and excellent for greenhouse growing anywhere. Asters are quite generally grown, but, as with us, they are something of a gamble. This is not surprising when the irregularity of the material they are grown in is considered; but they have it on us here in being able to produce a summer and winter crop of Asters.

No form of training can take the place of experience, especially in the growing of crops. The beginner will hit it fine now and then, but experience is the price of permanent success. A forceful example of this is the business and personality of Joe Leinhart at Oviedo. His stock is uniformly fine, particularly Peas, that are almost alone this season in their excellence. He starts them off early in October, uses a sub-irrigating system, and what else he does to get such Peas during an unfavorable season “depends on what needs to be done.” That’s the voice of experience. A block of Gardenias is noted here that seems to call for nothing more than glass over it to get a crop. They present a significant suggestion.

We drove into Central Florida on a moonlight evening over perfect highways and with the rich fragrance of orange blossoms in the air; it was an enchanting picture indeed. But let us look at it under the broad light of their semi-tropical sun. The wild jungle growth, especially of scrub palms, is a landscape feature. We are informed that it costs around \$1,000 an acre to clear and get it planted. Then, before a profitable crop can be produced, fertility must be put into the soil; and a heavy rain will leach this out of most material met with here, making it necessary to renew the fertilizer. There has been money in the citrus crops with the inevitable result,

—there are now too many. But the California shortage is helping out just now. The efficient distribution system worked out by their western competition is missing, and this is surprising with so many large interests engaged. Lack of frost, much humidity, and so much uncleared tropical waste land is responsible for the teeming life of insects and rot, just as is our protected greenhouse soil. (Concluded in June issue.)

## Of All Malacoides Primulas--Which?

On October 6th last, we made a sowing of some of the standard varieties of Malacoides, transplanted them into flats, thence to 3 in. pots where they flowered in March. We carried along 2 dozen of each variety simply for the sake of comparing one with the other. Following are some of our opinions and observations.

Mr. Eriksson's new BRILLIANCY stood out above the others with its extra deep brilliant rose color; flowers open a lighter shade but quickly deepen. Perhaps not quite as vigorous a grower as some others but very satisfactory and most strains available come 95% true. One of the "must haves" in Malacoides Primulas.

Two new varieties from England were notable. Both were about the same shade of bluish rose—a little deeper than our well-known NEW BABY and noticeably larger flowered. PRINCESS PATRICIA grown in 3 in. pots seemed a little tall as compared to NEW BABY or the other variety, PRINCESS MARY, that was considerably more dwarf and more compact and for this reason the preferred one of the two—we think.

Of Mr. Ericksson's varieties we like BABY ROSE very well for its distinct bright rose shade. Color slightly lighter than the above English varieties and a little deeper than NEW BABY that is also very good.

Getting into the slate or bluish lavender color of New Baby we find the variety GRANDIFLORA ROSEA considerably larger flowered and of a more dwarf compact growth and for this reason, prefer it. ROSEA SUPERBA is of this same extra large flowered type, also more dwarf than NEW BABY and a rich soft shade of lavender-rose. The lightest of all was the variety WADENSWILLER or SALMONEA, a dainty light cream pink, not extra large flowered.

The stock we flowered of BABY ALBA looked very nice—fairly robust growth, larger flowered and of a good pure white color. Some strains we have noted have their pure white effect broken by a small yellow center. In view of the current demand for white, BABY ALBA ought to be grown more for combinations as well as specimen plants. We also flowered a DOUBLE WHITE that wasn't very double nor very white.

Last season in Germany we picked up an entirely new shade in Malacoides, a very pleasing fairly deep salmon rose—deep enough to be quite individual, extra large flowered and of a dwarf compact habit. Our check of it seemed slower growing than standard varieties but is developing into very nice plants. Is sent out under the name, BALL SALMON ROSE.

—GEO. Jr.

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## Schizanthus

Schizanthus are now in full flower everywhere—a good time for wideawake growers to note good new varieties for their early fall sowing.

*Pictured: Two distinct types Schizanthus. Right—New Ball Dwarf.*

Most interesting among our 1937 trials noted here early in April, were the new and unusually large flowered finely colored Hybrid strains from England. The Blackmore & Langdon Giant Blotched strain seemed especially striking; quite large and free flowering, each flower with a large richly contrasting blotch—excellent for cutting. Hurst & Son's Monarch Mixed, which will be available this fall, seemed equally large flowered, of nicely balanced color mixture, and possibly better habit than the Blotched. Dr. Badger's Hybrids, already fairly well known as a large flowered strain, showed up well compared to the others, having a predominance of good bright pink shades. The above two make fine large pot plants.

Of the regular sorts, Brilliance came about 90% true to its deep amaranth shade; color seemed a trifle heavy, but strain was fairly large flowered and uniform. Bridal Veil looked especially nice, semi-dwarf, and 95% clear white. Ball Brilliant Blend seemed a well balanced mixture, fairly tall. We failed to note any distinct difference in flower type of Butterfly mixture, but found it a fairly large flowered strain with good colors.

Trials of Ball Dwarf Mixed showed up, as usual, about half as tall as the regular varieties and still seems the ideal pot plant strain. It continues to throw about 25% to 30% semi tall loose leggy plants, but with the 15 or 20 single plant selections being made annually, we hope within a year or two to have this difficulty overcome; also to darken the color mixture, and possibly to get the strain to flower earlier.

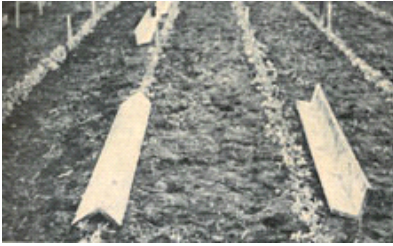
We were admittedly surprised the other day to find, of a few sprays of Schizanthus and of Sweet Peas in a vase on our desk, the Schizanthus outlasted the Peas by 3 days—which suggests real value in the former for cutting. Considering the ease of culture, keeping qualities, fairly long stems, fine large richly colored flowers of the new Hybrid Strains, we feel that the value of Schizanthus for cutting and all types of retail work is not as fully appreciated as it should be. Any of the large Hybrids or such strains as Bridal Veil, Brilliance, etc. do very well for the purpose, altho probably none have enough substance to stand shipping to market.

For fine cut flowers in early spring, sow Sept. 1, flat off 2" x 3", and when large enough, bench in a shallow soil, not over 3" or 4" deep, to restrict growth and bring them into flower earlier. Top once, carry along in a 45 or 50 degree house, and be sure to support them timely.

For fine pot plants, sow either dwarf bushy Ball Dwarf Mixed or taller and larger flowered Hybrid strains in October, plant out in flats when large enough to handle. When they begin to crowd, pot them off into 3's, topping them; shift to 4's before they get potbound.

—VIC.





The above is from a photo made April 18th of our newly planted out Late or Summer Peas. We show it to picture our method of protecting them from frost or even a real freeze. The material is 6 in. cypress and will last indefinitely if cared for.

The sowing of these plants was made in January. Grown on in 3 in. pots they will flower heavily the last half of June, the open season for brides and graduates. If good hard Peas on 8 to 10 in. stems are of use at that season is for each of us to decide. Even in our trying climate they usually make a substantial profit for us and last well into July. But cost and labor are involved in controlling aphids and watering. Our cost accounting shows a cost of 4½c per 3 in. pot plant in the field.

We have seen this class of Peas sown out around May 1st and without any attempt at supporting, they produced a fair crop. The growth tends to point straight up, keeping the flower stems straight. In the Sweet Pea seed fields of California there is no attempt made to support the heavy growth and it is difficult to find anything but straight-stemmed flowers with this treatment. Except for a late out-door sowing that excessive temperature forces into a light crop with little growth, this no-support plan is of course not recommended. The vines are encouraged to make more growth when supports are provided and the space between the rows must be clear for cultivating and picking. We use the same supporting plan generally used in the greenhouse, a wire at the top and bottom connected with 3 ply cotton twine. Under our conditions the supports should be 5' high and the wire must be stretched quite tight to prevent sagging.



## Early Peas In Southern Texas

In southern Texas, as well as Florida, Early Flowering Sweet Peas are flourishing. Mrs. E.E. Phelps of McAllen, Texas is responsible for the above excellent showing. We do not usually associate such tropical splendor with cool temperature Peas. The moderate winter season is responsible. A weakening of the growth can be detected in the foreground of the picture but we rarely note Peas anywhere without a few such spots. We have often analyzed soil from such weak areas without finding anything wrong with its fertility, but with plenty decay at the roots of Peas. In the south eelworms are suspected when this happens under glass some form of rot is usually responsible. It is interesting that our popular northern varieties do well down

there; but where growth is restricted by heat and strong sun, the strongest growers should be used. In making more growth, such varieties will be more productive. We find Josie should head the list of such. Others are Harmony, Hope, and Mrs. Hoover; also the new Bridesmaid and Sequoia.