

# GROWERTALKS

## Article Archive

### Saving Water at Alluvion

*George Furukawa*

What one nursery does to conserve water under drought restrictions

Hawaii has been undergoing a severe drought since the year 2000 that has decimated crops and resulted in the loss of millions of dollars. Alluvion, a 20-acre nursery that grows 500 varieties of potted plants (flowers and foliage for the interior and exterior) on the North Shore of Oahu, has implemented several simple measures to control water usage that nurseries everywhere can adopt.

Hawaii Governor Linda Lingle declared a state of emergency with regard to the prolonged drought in August 2003. The Honolulu Board of Water Supply issued island-wide water conservation measures on a voluntary basis, so Alluvion made changes in their production facility. Although the measures were recently lifted, Alluvion decided they'd continue to use their water-saving measures during the voluntary restriction.

"Most of our greenhouse and landscape materials are on timers, and thus, watering is done between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. to take care of any evaporation," says Susan Matsushima, owner of Alluvion. "In preparation for the Christmas season, all new irrigation systems with individual drip lines were installed for the poinsettias that we grew. This will be used for our continued production in the future."

In landscape production in the fields, Susan says they installed individual drip lines for larger pots.

They increased the amount of peat moss in their media to retain more moisture (less cinder). Stock plants have been mulched with composted materials to retain more moisture—all simple measures that nearly any nursery can put to work.

Alluvion was started in 1996 with seven employees. Today, the nursery has 34 employees and four segments of business: wholesale nursery (the largest segment); wholesale florist, gift basket operation and fulfillment center (baskets with plants, candies or pineapples shipped from Hawaii for Hilo Hattie, Hawaiian Host, Dole, Food Pantry and Mauna Loa); and a plant rental service.

Is there a meaning behind the name, Alluvion? "I worked for Amfac [a Hawaiian company] and was a partner with Aloha Pacific Farms," says Susan. "I know that the customer using the Yellow Pages always starts at the top of the category. Thus, I wanted a name that starts with 'A.'" I actually looked in the dictionary to find something to do with agriculture. Alluvion is the ebb and flow of water that creates new land (alluvial soils). I knew that we would do more than just plants and thus named my company Alluvion, Inc."

*George Furukawa is a freelance writer based in Hawaii.*