A Look Back: Sharing the Wealth

Compiled Jennifer Zurko

From February 1938

A few words on seed sowing might be in order at this point. Seed or seedlings are baby plants, and for this reason enjoy some heat, but not too much—around 60 deg. is plenty for cool temperature plants, and most bedding annuals belong in that class. If excessively warm and the soil is kept wet thru lack of drainage, the germs of rot become more active and might easily attack and destroy seed in which the germ is weak. We never consider it good practice to set seed flats on or near heating pipes as is sometimes done, for most of the flat might become excessively heated. We once set a flat of Pea seed with one edge next to a steam pipe. In a short time the seed exposed to the heat was rotted with a mold. Such observations point clearly enough to the fact that perfectly good seed can be and frequently is destroyed by rot; but excessive moisture also seems responsible for rotting seed. …

—George J. Ball

January Notes by Vic Ball

With the Christmas rush out of the way, the growing crews at greenhouses everywhere turn to thoughts of spring—and spring sowings. January is sowing time for 3 and 4 inch pot Petunias for late spring—and “planning time” for later sowings of annuals for bedding sales. …

Kalanchoe

Short, well flowered plants of Tom Thumb are finding a ready demand, especially for Christmas. They are not hard to grow, just the usual care of carefully following the “rules of the road.” Here they are, to make nice fives for Christmas:

Feb. 1 Sow seed. Need 65 [degrees] to sprout.
May 1 (About) Shift to 2” bands or 2 ¼” pots—60 [degrees] all the way.
As Ready Shift to 5” pots—again, 60 [degrees] minimum as firing season starts.
Sept. 1 to 21 Shade with black cloth from 5 P.M. to 8 A.M. every night.
Sept. 21 till [sic] in flower Light nightly 60 watt bulbs 4 x 4 ft.—3 ft. above plants.
Lights on 10:30 P.M. to 1:30 A.M. nightly.

A later sowing can be made on March 21 to make 4 inch by Christmas if kept at 60 [degrees] and given the same shade and light treatment.
The period of additional light is a new addition to the procedure—on the recommendation of John Seeley at the Pennsylvania State College. His tests show that this period of lights will produce much deeper green foliage, and more compact plants. They will bloom OK without the lights, but they are worth the trouble. …

From August 1968
“On May 26, five prominent U.S. floriculture research men came in for a sort of group discussion on seed geraniums. Each reported to the group the results of his own tests as experienced this past spring. It was a most interesting day! From the left: Paul Randolph, Joyce Payne, Dr. Dick Payne, Dr. Roy Larson, Bob Rieman, Dr. Jim Boodley, Dr. Will Carlson, Dr. Harold Wilkins, Vic Ball and Jack Kline, who bred and developed the Carefree geranium.”

From February 1975: Florel—More Geranium Cuttings Per Stock Plant
Dan Reed, OSU grad student, reported on foliar spray of geranium stock plants with Florel which, combined with 10 foot-candles of light, boosted yield of geranium cuttings by 65%! Cuttings were somewhat thinner and didn’t root quite as well, but in balance it did look interesting. …

The Florel (American Chemical Co.) was applied as a 500 ppm spray. Three tests were set up, one sprayed every 3 weeks, one every 4 weeks, one every 5 weeks. Lighting is 10 foot-candles, dusk to dawn, September 1 to March 1.

pictured: “Florel-treated plant right; check plant left. Note smaller leaves, more of them, more compact plant. Quite a different growth!”

The geranium stock plants were grown in 8-inch pots. The treated plants had a definitely larger leaf canopy. There were more individual leaves but they were smaller. Also, there was some height retardant. As stated before, stem diameter of unrooted cuttings was somewhat less in the treated area.

The untreated controls produced 8% of unrooted cuttings which failed to root, against 16% of treated plants.

Removal of buds from treated stock plants was almost eliminated—some time saving. GT