

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Diego Slams Mid-Atlantic

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Growers and retailers throughout much of North Carolina and Virginia dealt with an early and deep snowfall the weekend of December 8. Dubbed Winter Storm Diego, the storm delivered years' worth of snow to some areas, caused thousands of power outages and at least three confirmed deaths.

Columnist Abe VanWingerden of Metrolina Greenhouses reported via email that his operation in Huntersville, North Carolina, about 30 minutes north of Charlotte, was below the worst of the snow.

"North Carolina and Virginia got hammered for two days," Abe wrote. "We were on the edge of it, and our

Huntersville location got about 4 inches, and our York, South Carolina location got about an inch of ice and snow.”

Abe reported that no damage was done, then quipped, “We did have [Weather Channel meteorologist] Jim Cantore in town for two days, which you know means it was bad.”

In King, North Carolina, about 90 miles to the north, Judy Mitchell of Mitchell’s Nursery and Greenhouse reported 14 in. of snow—“A record for December,” she says. “Average snowfall for the winter is 8.8 inches. At least it was on Sunday, with not many people out. Friends had been without power for a day and a half. We were lucky and power only went out for three hours.”

Her son and his friends spent the day cleaning snow off the unheated coldframes, while the heated greenhouses were fine.

Hoffman Nursery in Rougemont, North Carolina, which is 100 miles due east of Mitchell’s, got just 6 in. of snow, says Marketing Director Shannon Curry. “It snowed a lot on Sunday, melted a bit late in the day, and then snowed again on Monday morning.”

Three hours to the northwest, at Riverbend Nursery in Riner, Virginia, they’re used to snow, but not this early, says Sarah Brown, general manager. They got 16 in. of the white stuff over 24 hours, followed by a round of sleet.

“Generally, our larger snows come in February and March. Thankfully, nothing was damaged.”

As for how Diego impacted sales, Abe says it actually bumped up traffic in stores as folks prepped for the storm. “Get your Christmas stuff along with your bread and milk and spend two days decorating was the theme,” he says. Sales slowed for three days following the storm, but then schools opened and things got back to normal. **GT**