

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Chilling Out

Jennifer Zurko



“Do you want to see our bulb cooler?” asked Mike DiGenova, head grower at Louis Davino Greenhouses, as he pulled back a very substantial sliding door.

I was there in late November to check out their poinsettia crop, but Mike gave me, along with Ball Seed sales rep Gene Stickley, the full tour. This is one of their two massive hot gas defrost coolers that holds over 750,000 pots filled with spring bulbs patiently waiting for poinsettia season to end so that they can be taken out of the darkness and put in the greenhouse.

Louis Davino Greenhouses in Millstone, New Jersey, has been growing bulbs since Lou opened the business

over 40 years ago. Their primary customer base consists of supermarkets and Mike said they sell a lot of potted bulb plants during the early spring/Easter season.

Of the 750,000 pots, which range from 4 to 10 in., there are 6 bulbs per pot of tulips, and 3 bulbs per pot of hyacinths and daffodils, so Mike estimates that there are a couple million individual bulbs in the coolers.

Although they still do a good business in bulbs, Mike admitted that they’ve cut back about 20% over the years from when they started growing them. Traditionally, potted bulb plants have been used as Easter gifts and as leave-behinds at gravesites in the spring, but there’s been a bit of a downturn in those uses.

Still, when compared to poinsettias, Mike said he would much rather grow bulbs. They may take up some space for four to five months, but their growing environment is easier to control and they’re only in the greenhouse for three to four weeks. Once you put on a pot cover and ship them out, you can start thinking about ordering the next batch.

They get all their bulbs from the Netherlands, where Mike said they have great suppliers. We’ve written in these pages before about severe weather significantly affecting bulb supplies and that’s something that Mike and his team anticipate and adjust accordingly. They’ve always been able to get the bulbs they need, even if some have to be substituted with ones that may incur more cost.

“This is why the relationship with your supplier is so important,” said Mike. **GT**