

Your Views on Mum, Poinsettia Sales



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Your mum season: "10+!"
Abe: "Home for the holidays"
Your outlook for Christmas
What about resorts, parks?
All the "In the Breakroom" stuff
Yup, we're ready to go live
Finally I, II ...



Your mum season was stellar

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Last time, I talked a bit about mum and poinsettia season, speculating that the former seemed very good and the latter should also be good, but admitting, "Hey, what do I know?" Because you're on the front lines living the dream and I'm only writing about it from the comfort and safety of the *GrowerTalks* editorial lair.

Thankfully, you responded in abundance to my request for information about both seasons ... and amazingly, what you said jibed with what I said—thank you for that!

Here are some comments about the mum season—which, one of you, in the spirit of my Spring Weekend Sales Survey, scored a 10++:

Missouri: "We grew 2,500 mums (wholesale) this year and for the first time in a decade, we sold out in less than three weeks. Every. Single. Mum. Most of them were not even cracking color! We usually have mums well into October."—*Wendy Becker, Green Gate Farms*

Kansas: "Fall Mums 10++. Mum sales were exceptionally good and we completely sold out. The season started early and the majority of our mums were sold in green bud or barely cracking color because demand was so strong. We did take a small increase on the price of our smaller mums, but didn't increase [the price on] our larger sizes. Pansy and ornamental kale/cabbage sales have also been extremely good this fall. We took a chance and increased production, which has proven to be a good move."—*Kathy Cude-Miller, Sedan Floral*

Wisconsin: "Our mum season was outstanding. We grew more 12-in. and 14-in. mums this year and sold every one. We also raised our price on the basic 9-in. mum and sold out those as well without ever offering a quantity discount. Our best trick is to sink a finished 9-in. mum (\$9.99) into a 10-in. hanging basket and sell it for \$24.99. We sold over 100 of those. Not a bad margin."—*Chris Williams, K&W Greenery*

New Hampshire: "Sold out first week in October and there was nothing available from wholesalers near us."—*Beth Simpson, Rolling Green Nursery*

Ohio: "We, too, had a busy fall sales season ... a continuation of spring and summer. We sold out of mums (and other fall items) early, but it has slowed a bit with poor weather over the past week. Early in the season we had thought we would be looking to add to the 2021 mum crop, but now we are figuring we will hold with our 2020 numbers and perhaps look to raise prices on our 8 in. We are taking advantage of this year to add production space—not to necessarily grow more, but to do so more efficiently."—*Jeff Griff, Lowes Greenhouse*

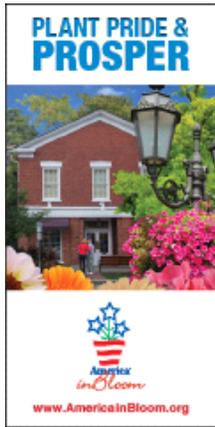
British Columbia, Canada: "Mum season was a complete sellout. It started [in] early August and just finished for us. We grow early-, mid- and late-season varieties in a wide color range. Retail price is 4 in., \$2.99, and 1 gal., \$5.99."—*John Derrick, Elk Lake Garden Centre*



More on fall mums

Michigan: "Mum sales were better than ever—we sold everything we could get our hands on."—*Terrie Schwartz, Wedel's Nursery, Florist & Garden Center*

Ohio: "Mums began selling in early September. They went fast. Color sells. The late-season mums (now in full color) sold out this week. While cabbage and kale sold well, our market here is



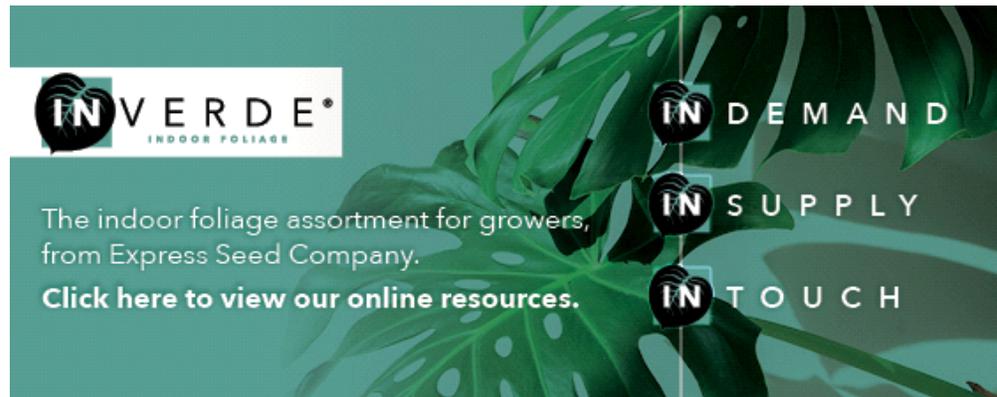
still slow to use them. We still have a manageable number of cabbage and kale for sale. They did not sell well until the second week of October.”—Kevin Wilson, *Shademakers*

Wisconsin: “The mum season was exactly as you stated: came out of the box early and strong. Our vendors had everything we had pre-booked and then some. We sold basically everything we had with little or no discounting, finishing up over 16% ahead of last year in units with stronger margin rates. What I have left is basically a handful of smaller 5 in. that were a late arrival.

“Not that you asked, but pumpkin sales are tracking much the same, tracking over 32% ahead of last year. But last year, the Midwest had such a horrible crop (rotting) that pumpkins were somewhat scarce in our market, so many were brought in from outside our market last year just to have some.”—Jerry Schmitt, *Stein’s Garden & Home*

Virginia: “Demand was incredible, started out early selling green plants with picture tags. We never saw any color in our fields at any time. We do fundraisers with schools and did not know what to expect because of COVID. We kept our numbers the same, but had a 20% increase in fundraiser sales. Retail prices were set and remained in place with no reductions in price: 8-in. pots at \$7.99 were still the most popular, 6-in. pots at \$4.99 next, and our giant 12-in. pot, 3 ppp, \$29.99, sold out extremely fast. We had cleaned out our field before the first of October. Great Season.”—Mark Landa, *Boulevard Flower Gardens*

Michigan: “We sold everything out as planned at full retail. We raised prices going into fall an average of 20% with zero resistance. This was our first season in 23 years that all items were sold through our retail facility. We had been a staple at a couple of farmers markets where we had previously sold 50% of our crop. We did reduce our overall numbers by 25%, but our own retail sales were up and so were profits!”—Thomas Jusko, *Jusko’s Greenhouse*



Abe: “Home for the holidays” will be good for us

GrowerTalks columnist and Metrolina Greenhouses co-owner Abe Van Wingerden is always generous with his sales data, which is just that—data, based on real sales results. When he takes the time to share it with us, I like to give him the space to do so. Here’s what he wrote about his sales to hundreds of big-box customers:

1) Mum/Fall season has been great and continues to build vs. what we have seen this spring and summer. If you have it, consumers will buy it.

- Spring COMPs: 3X normal COMP rates
- Summer COMPs: 4X normal COMP rates
- Fall COMPs: 5X normal COMP rates

Mums and pansies have been very strong, and while weather still dictates the overall sales, when weather is there, we are seeing growth well beyond the norm. Net: With or without Halloween, fall decorating and gardening is strong.

2) Yes, there is definitely a risk on fewer “fundraisers” etc. due to COVID, but this drop has been small (not large) and this business as a percent of the total is small (not large).

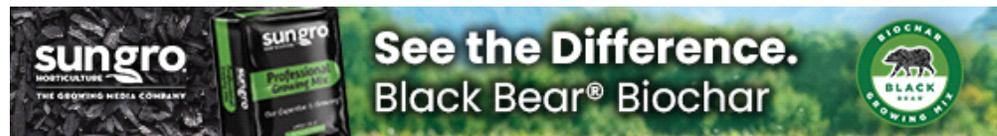
- All trends point to consumers leaning in more to Christmas as they are home more

- Poinsettias and other Christmas live goods should play a big role into this “Home for the Holidays” theme

- Black Friday over a few weeks vs. one day is a good thing for everyone to drive more purchases over a longer time frame

Thanks, Abe! Good thoughts!

Now, the big question for Abe is, will Metrolina be expected to beat those unbelievable comps next year?



Your outlook for poinsettias, fundraisers

That's a good segue to your views of Christmas and poinsettia sales:

North Carolina: “We have seen a lot of interest in poinsettias for the upcoming season. I have already sold three retail last week to two different customers. They wanted to see them finish coloring. November 3 was my previous first sale [of the poinsettia season]. We are expecting good poinsettia sales, as one of my competitors has decided not to grow poinsettias this year. We do poinsettia fundraisers for groups and have seen more interest than usual. Churches are already placing orders, but some that placed Easter orders early cancelled because of COVID. We'll see how things go. We are growing 103 different varieties this year and numbers are up slightly over last year. We do not plan to host a one-day Open House, but instead plan to spread it from November 29 to December 8. We are usually closed on Sundays, but plan to open those two Sundays from 12:00 to 4:00.”—*Judy Mitchell, Mitchell's Nursery and Greenhouse*

Wisconsin: “I think Christmas will be good as well. I do think we will see less poinsettias sold to churches and some smaller school fundraisers, but I think retail poinsettia sales will more than make up for it. I think greens, wreaths and other decorating will be really good, too.”—*Chris Williams, K&W Greenery*

Wisconsin: “Right now, we are planning for much the same as last year in terms of poinsettias. The concern is that some of the Christmas parties and churches may not be taking the same kind of numbers that they used to. Consumers will still want the holiday décor at home, but even then, the family gatherings might be smaller. That said, a little bit more of an investment in some of the other non-poinsettia holiday plants like the product we see from Coastal Nursery. Poinsettias are still better than 50% of those holiday plant sales, but the other holiday plant material sales are continuing to grow. From that family gathering standpoint, what did I hear the other day? That grocers are ordering smaller turkeys this year on the same assumption: that family gatherings will be smaller.”—*Jerry Schmitt, Stein's Garden & Home*

Pennsylvania: “Some of our traditional poinsettia fundraising groups (music groups associated with schools) are not selling poinsettias since they cannot have holiday concerts. However, we have several baseball teams who are selling poinsettias since they missed some of their spring fundraisers due to the spring shutdowns. It will be interesting to see how the baseball teams do in early winter since they won't be playing much baseball in December here in Pennsylvania. Churches are still partially shut down in much of Pennsylvania, but the garden centers are ordering as normal. Hopefully, our lovely state does not see the extreme government shutdowns

again this holiday season as the COVID numbers continue to rise.”—Aimee Rohrbach,
Musselman Wholesale Foliage

Thanks for all the opinions. Feel free to keep them coming to beytes@growertalks.com.



What about resorts and theme parks?

Reader Craig Anderson from Western Pulp Products added to the fundraiser and church sales question by asking about theme parks, writing:

“Chris, how about the loss in poinsettia sales California growers will see with theme parks like Disneyland still not allowed to open? Did growers start plants this year only to have their contracts canceled? What about fall mums? I’m sure the theme parks canceled most of their mum contracts, too.”

Craig added a link to a [2019 article](#) in the *Orange County Register* that said that Disney installs 10,000 poinsettias.



Good question! I know the Florida theme parks are open, and I'm sure decorating, and Las Vegas is open again, but what about other resorts and parks and attractions in other places? Can someone weigh in who deals with that market? Shoot me some details [HERE](#).



All the "In the Breakroom" education

Ball Tech on Demand's "In the Breakroom" education program for October is over, but that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of the webinars and podcasts recorded by our online editor Bill Calkins. Each of the nine videos features 30 minutes of excellent, timely crop production information from experts like Dr. Todd Cavins, Dr. Will Healy, James Doukas and Chris Fifo. Topics include:

- Starting Strong with Vegetative Propagation
- Training Your Team to Water Properly
- Understanding Photoperiod for Key Crops
- Starting Strong with Seed Propagation
- Impatiens 2.0
- Perennial Production Tips & Tricks
- Calibrachoa—from Start to Finish to Sold
- Fertilizer Choice—Nutrition for All Stages
- Get Prepared for 2021! From Cleanup and Maintenance to Placing Orders

Find them all at the *GrowerTalks* YouTube channel [HERE](#).



Survey: Folks are itching for live events

I could have saved them all the trouble of surveying 9,000 people and just told them we're all ready to attend a real live industry event again. But they did the survey anyway and confirmed what we all know: Show visitors and exhibitors overwhelmingly prefer live events, and there is no evidence of a major shift away from face-to-face meetings for digital alternatives. Hurray!

"They" are UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, and SISO, the Society for Independent Show Organizers, along with Explori, a live event research specialist. The survey, which covered 30 countries, was shared by our unofficial sister publication *FloraCulture International (FCI)*.

"The social aspect of events remains a critical draw for both groups, who rely on live events to create connections within their communities," wrote *FCI* of the study. "Study participants, globally, believe that this aspect of events cannot be served effectively by digital events. There is a clear message from visitors that the quality of exhibitors is paramount, while exhibitors are now

also valuing visitor quality over quantity.

You can read the *FCI* piece [HERE](#). Or watch the UFI webinar on the topic [HERE](#).



Finally I ...

From our friend and in-house horticulturist Dr. Marvin Miller comes the word of the day: **“florilegium.”**

Wikipedia says in medieval Latin, a florilegium (plural florilegia) was a compilation of excerpts from other writings. The word is from the Latin flos (flower) and legere (to gather): literally a gathering of flowers, or collection of fine extracts from the body of a larger work.

Writes Marvin, “My debate is whether a flower arrangement might be called a florilegium and whether a magazine might also be referred to as one. In my mind, perhaps a series of abstracts (excerpts) might be referred to as a florilegium, but I’m not sure. Anyway, it’s something to contemplate.”

Indeed!

My thought was that it would be a great name for a trendy floral boutique. What would you use the word for? Let me know [HERE](#).

Finally II ...

Listen to me on Internet radio (or watch the live stream) this Sunday when I do a stint on the Mike Nowak Show. Mike has been doing garden radio for more than 20 years in Chicago; I think it’s been about that long since I last appeared with him, so we’ll have plenty to catch up on. I believe he wants to pick my brain about gardening and how the plant industry has fared through the pandemic. I suspect I can come up with a fact and an opinion or two for him.

It’s at 9:00 a.m. Central time this Sunday. Tune in to the live stream [HERE](#) or the audio program [HERE](#).

Oh, and remember to set your clocks back Saturday night before bed!

Remember, be positive but test negative!

Chi

Chris Beytes

Editor

GrowerTalks and *Green Profit*

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