

V'Day Marketing Tips + Black Root Rot + Delphinium



Crop culture and commentary for fresh-cut flower growers

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BLOOM BEAT

Crop culture and commentary for fresh-cut flower growers

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

January Farm Update
Black Root Rot Primer
YGA Nomination Time!
1-800-Flowers' Pick for '26
Marketing Your Bouquet Subs



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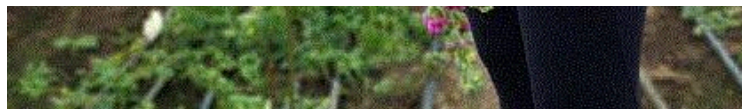


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January Farm Update





January stock for florist sales have been a hit this season. These are the Iron series.

Happy New Year! Tater and I hope you and your farm crew had a restful holiday season ... and that you finally got the evergreen sap off your hands if you were making wreaths and grave blankets. I know the struggle and it is very real!

We're savoring our first few harvests of ranunculus; it makes early January tolerable. Our florist friends are eagerly awaiting our Valentine's availability and have high hopes for a good ranunculus crop.

Valentines Day is a challenge in Michigan because it's consistently cloudy in December and January. Sunlight is a luxury this time of year and ranunculus respond readily to the few sunny days we get. We try to be conservative with our preorders, but at the same time don't want to sit on product during Valentine's Day week because we didn't want to commit to quantities. It's a delicate balance—and we get better at it every year. The challenge for a florist is that a lot of Valentines orders come at the last minute, whereas at Mother's Day, folks are ordering flowers for mom in advance. During the Valentines Day rush, very seldom are orders placed ahead and it's based on last minute online orders and walk-in trade. As a result, florists carefully calculate their buying a month ahead and hope to sell out of their inventory based on previous year's sales. Tater and I are trying to commit to quantities early while also gauging realistic production numbers. I just hope we get some consistent sunny days between now and early February!

Valentine's Day is the highest grossing flower holiday in the USA—it's one of the crown jewels for the flower business. Even if you don't have flowers ready to sell you can still capitalize on consumer excitement for flowers.

In this edition of *Bloom Beat*, Tater has some marketing tips for your Valentine's Day campaign, tips on dealing with black root rot, young grower nominations, ideas for your CSA subscriptions and more.

With all that being said, let's talk shop!



Black Root Rot Primer



Figure 2. Pansy plants showing leaf yellowing that resembles nutritional deficiency symptoms. Plants are infected with black root rot (*Berkeleyomyces basicola*), and as infection progresses, plants are stunted and unthrifty. (Image by J. Williams-Woodward)



Image 3. Progression of severity and damage to pansy roots infected with black root rot. Plant on left is not infected. Plants on right show almost complete loss of roots due to infection. (Image by A. Windham; used with permission)

Black root rot attacks a variety of our favorite cut flower crops—most notably ranunculus. I had a small lapse in judgement this fall that led to an outbreak of the disease.

One of the challenges of constant production is that our greenhouses never get a rest—especially propagation. I don't think our propagation house has been empty in the six years since we built it. I love starting seeds and plants, and space is a constant struggle and balancing act. My big mistake was that I never earmarked time to sterilize our propagation benches this fall. Here is a summary from our friends at [e-Gro](#) about black root rot.

Berkeleyomyces basicola fungus causes black root. Common symptoms are similar to nutritional deficiencies. Use context clues to help you differentiate between a nutritional problem and a disease outbreak. If yellowing foliage and stunted roots are consistently affecting plants in a flat, it's likely nutritional. If these symptoms are scattered and inconsistent in a given area, it may be black root rot. As the disease progresses, black, discolored roots become more evident. But sometimes symptoms go unnoticed until it is too late.

If black root rot is a suspect, examine a sample under a microscope and look for black spores on the root tips. As always, you can send samples to your favorite plant pathology lab for confirmation. Dr. Jean Williams calls black root rot a "root nibbler"—meaning infection starts at the root tips and slowly moves throughout the root system. So look at the root tips first. High soil moisture, cool conditions (55-65F) and alkaline pH all favor black root spore development.

If black root rot is in your facility, sanitation needs to be a priority. Black chlamydospores can live in soil debris, wood benches and contaminated containers. Hand tools, water, hands and clothing also spread the spores. Below are the recommended sanitation practices (note: be sure to remove debris from objects before sanitizing):

- Wood benches can be sterilized with a 10% diluted chlorine bleach solution.
- Diluted bleach can also sterilize flats and plug trays when soaked for 10 minutes.
- Spraying ZeroTol (industrial hydrogen peroxide) at a rate of 2.5oz/gal. has been shown to effectively kill spores on plug trays and flats.
- If you have sensitive plant material that is prone to black root rot it may be worth preventatively drenching with a fungicide (such as Clear's 3336 or OHP 6672).

I realize now that I should intentionally plan for this at least twice a year—not just when a bench casually becomes empty. A combination of dirty greenhouse benches and dirty flats led to a small outbreak of black root rot on some of our ranunculus flats. Luckily, it was a small portion of the flats, and we readily fixed the problem. Trust me, this is a problem you want to address immediately because black root rot spores can last for years on the bench and on used flats.

In hindsight, buying new flats when we were too busy to sterilize our flats this fall would have been the cost-effective alternative to a disease outbreak. The more I farm the more I realize it's a balancing act, and this a good lesson I won't have to learn again. Hopefully, we put this on your radar in time to save you some hassle and save your pansies, snapdragons and ranunculus.

Young Grower Award Nominations Are Open!

Each year, *GrowerTalks* celebrates exceptional young growers who are making significant contributions to horticulture by presenting the annual Young Grower Award

Nominations are now open for the 2026 edition of the prestigious *GrowerTalks*/Ball Horticultural Company Young Grower Awards. Candidates for this award must be under 35 years old and illustrate leadership qualities, creativity and passion for growing plants. A panel of discerning green industry professionals select a winner from the top three nominees (which are chosen by the Ball Publishing editors). The three finalists will be treated like royalty at Cultivate'26, and the winners will be announced at AmericanHort's Unplugged event Monday evening of Cultivate.



[HERE](#) is the link for the nomination form. You can nominate an employee, peer, friend or even yourself! Just remember applicants must be under 35 years of age as of July 14, 2026 and live in the USA or Canada. Application deadline is March 1, 2026. Thank you Ball Horticultural Company, BASF, AmericanHort, and The Garden Center Group for investing in the future growers of our industry.

Oh, and if you're on the retail side of the business, nominations are also open for the *Green Profit*/The Garden Center Group [Young Retailer Award](#)!



!-800-Flowers 2026 Flower of the Year

2026 Flower of the Year: Delphinium



BRYTTA // GETTY IMAGES

1-800-Flowers.com announced that its 2026 Flower of the Year is delphinium! Their selection is based on the flower's symbolic representation of aspiration and hope for the future. The brand notes that delphinium is especially on trend right now, thanks to the rise of cool-toned florals and the “calm luxury” aesthetic—designers love its sculptural look and its symbolism tied to growth and healing.

Delphinium is one of my favorite flowers of all time. Their stately spires of blues, lavenders, purples and whites are second to none. They are one of the only true blue flowers we can grow. The best part is that nothing compares to locally grown delphinium—and you get a premium price for them! Admittedly, Tater and I have yet to perfect the art of delphinium production, but when it is in season our florists clamor for every bunch we have. It's quite the spectacle when we have to ration bunches.

Now, you may be wondering why we're drawing attention to a large online retail floral business like 1-800 Flowers. It's because you can capitalize on the marketing someone else is doing and ride the wave! You don't always have to reinvent the wheel if consumers are already looking for a specific flower. All you need to do is market yourself and show them that YOU are the authentic, local and sustainable alternative—and you grow a superior product for your customers. Tater and I grow more delphinium every year and it's never enough. I hope you try your hand at it too, because it could pay off big!

Marketing Your CSA Subscription for Valentine's Day



Friends, now is the time to start marketing your bouquet subscriptions for this season. The good news is you can still craft a social media campaign if you hop to it ASAP!

Valentine's Day is a great time to market to consumers since they are already primed to buy flowers. While they don't yet have their 2026 forecast out, [The National Retail Federation](#) predicted Valentine's Day spending in 2025 to reach a record-breaking \$27.5 billion. The average consumer was projected to spend \$188.81, and 40% of consumers surveyed planned on purchasing flowers—only second to candy purchases. Bottom line: You need to start marketing now!

There's no reason why your farm can't capitalize on this holiday with calculated marketing and giftable packaging. But spoiler alert: Posting about your subscription offerings the week before Valentine's Day is not enough time to engage your audience.

Tater and I do not sell CSA subscriptions, but we scoured [Harvard Business Review](#) for a good article on launching products using social media. I think it's a great starting point and will hopefully give you some food for thought to quickly craft a plan if you haven't done so already. Here are a few of HBR's "10 Tactics for Launching a Product Using Social Media":

- Social media is a critical supporting character in your marketing campaign. Use it to bring awareness to the upcoming launch, but don't use it as the sole means of communicating with your customers.
- Build anticipation with multiple posts before the formal announcement. Share teasers, countdowns and behind-the-scenes content. (This is why planning is important!)
- High-quality photos and videos go a long way. Creating quality content with crisp images and quality audio will help stop your customers from scrolling past your post.
- Contests and giveaways are a good way to boost engagement and sharing.

- Don't underestimate the value in going live on social media—be sure to announce this in a previous post to encourage people to tune in.
- Always be sure to answer comments and questions on your social media posts. Not only does this help boost engagement, it also fosters connection and trust. Remember, people are buying YOU as much as they are buying your product.

It's also important to keep in mind that consumers generally need seven exposures to a product before they act and make a purchase—also known as the Marketing Rule of 7. If you don't already have a plan, be agile and make one as soon as possible.

Have you launched your marketing campaign for Valentine's Day? What's worked for you in the past? What's your favorite packaging that makes your CSA certificate an experience to open? Tater and I would love to share your successes and tips in our next edition of *Bloom Beat*. Drop us a line [HERE](#).

Happy Growing!

Lindsay 

[Lindsay Daschner](#) (and [Tater](#))
Editor-at-Large—*Bloom Beat*
Owner—Forget-Me-Not Farms

This email was received by 6,221 of your fellow fresh-cut flower growers!

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