

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Direct Dianthus

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Mast Young Plants GM Brian Weesies (right) and Senior Grower Michael DeBerti check on a tray of dianthus that their team just started propagating for spring.

This year, there's something a bit different about these dianthus. The varieties are the same, but how they came to Mast has changed.

Back in August, Selecta One announced that all of its potted, perennial and annual dianthus are now available as unrooted cuttings directly from its farm in Kenya. Prior to this, for over 70 years, dianthus cuttings from offshore had to be put through a one-year "post-entry quarantine" before being sent to U.S. growers. This prevented breeders from commercially producing large quantities of dianthus plants and growers from selling them into an untapped market.

After 10 years of working with the USDA and KEPHIS (Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services), Selecta was granted permission this past summer to import dianthus cuttings into the U.S.

When I visited Brian and Michael in early December, they were growing 150,000 SuperTrouper and Oscar Dianthus that were set to be shipped Week 50 for one of their customers in the south. Mast Young Plants was in the first group of growers that received URCs direct from Selecta's Kenya farm and it has made the whole process easier all the way around. Not only is there a noticeable quality difference because of the climate where they were produced, but they can be produced at a lower cost.

"For years, they couldn't be imported, so we did the best we could with cuttings produced from Canada. But now they can be imported from a country like Kenya with a great climate this time of year for producing stock," explained Brian. "So we expect even better results."

Going forward, Brian said Mast plans on getting as much of its dianthus cuttings from Selecta's Kenya farm as possible. **GT**

