



News & Views

for New Hampshire's Green Industry

September 2007

Color and Price Preferences of Consumers for Eustoma Cut Flowers

On bright and sunny days in late summer last year, we set up booths at farmer's markets in Portsmouth, Concord and Durham with colorful displays of *Eustoma grandiflorum* varieties. We had a short written survey that customers at the market could volunteer to fill out in return for a free cut flower. The objectives of the survey were to:

1. determine how familiar the general public already was with *Eustoma* (a.k.a. lisianthus) as a cut flower,
2. assess customers' preferences by color and variety, and
3. determine the perceived value for a bunch of ten stems; e.g., the price customers said they were willing to pay, although we were not selling the flowers.

The *Eustoma* were grown in a large variety trial at the UNH Woodman Research Farm in Durham. A report on the best varieties from a grower's viewpoint was published in the last issue of News and Views (available online at www.extension.unh.edu/Agric/Docs/May07N_V.pdf). Of the 14 varieties grown, eight were included in the customer survey on any given day. We only included top quality flowers in the display. The varieties and markets are listed in Table 1.

Ten stems per variety were put in clear glass vases which were arranged in random order on a table. They were labeled A through H, so the survey-takers did not know the variety names. Customers were asked to list their three favorite varieties by letter.



Series	Variety	Type	Market location*
Echo	lt. blue	double	P, C, D
"	champagne	double	P, C, D
Cinderella	blue	double	P, C, D
"	pink	double	P,C
"	ivory	double	
ABC	2-3 blue	double	
"	2-3 rose	double	C, D
"	2-3 blue blush	single	P, C
Laguna	2-3 deep rose	single	C
	2-3 ivory	single	
Twinkle	deep blue	single	P
"	pink	single	P, D
"	white	single	P, C, D
"	blue blush	single	D

Table 1

*Farmer's markets, P = Portsmouth, 09/06/06. C = Concord, 9/09/06. D = Durham, 09/11/06.

The respondents were predominately female and over age 35, although there was a larger proportion of males and young adults in the Durham survey (where 25% were male and 33% of respondents were under 35). Over 80% of the customers had purchased cut flowers during the year. Less than 25% could actually name the flowers displayed (either *Eustoma* or lisianthus were accepted as correct answers) but 85-90% of the people at each market thought they were “gorgeous” or “very attractive” flowers and they generated a great deal of excitement among the customers.



Figure 1, below, shows the colors preferred by customers at each location. The favorite variety at Portsmouth was ‘Twinkle Blue’, a very deep blue single type flower.

This seems to have skewed the preference at Portsmouth more heavily to favor the blues. When ‘Twinkle Blue’ was not a choice, however, pink was favored about equally to blue in Concord and pink was ranked over blue in Durham. The unique varieties ‘Blue Blush’ and ‘Champagne’ each had a good proportion of admirers, and many people started

conversing about these two varieties. As expected, white flowers in a single color bouquet did not catch many people’s eye. People also clearly preferred double flowers to single flowers.

The distribution of responses to the question “How much would you be willing to pay for a bunch of ten stems of these flowers?” (referring to the *Eustoma* on display), as shown in Figure 2, should be of great interest to growers selling at farmers markets. Two-thirds of the customers in Portsmouth and half in Durham failed to perceive any higher value for these flowers than for common bouquets they were used to purchasing for \$5-\$8 at the farmers markets. However, the combined mode (most frequent response) was \$10, and the mean (average) was \$9.67. Over half the customers in Concord were willing to pay over \$10 per bunch. It was noted that the customers willing to spend the most on flowers were young men! Perhaps we as growers could do a better job of targeting this market?

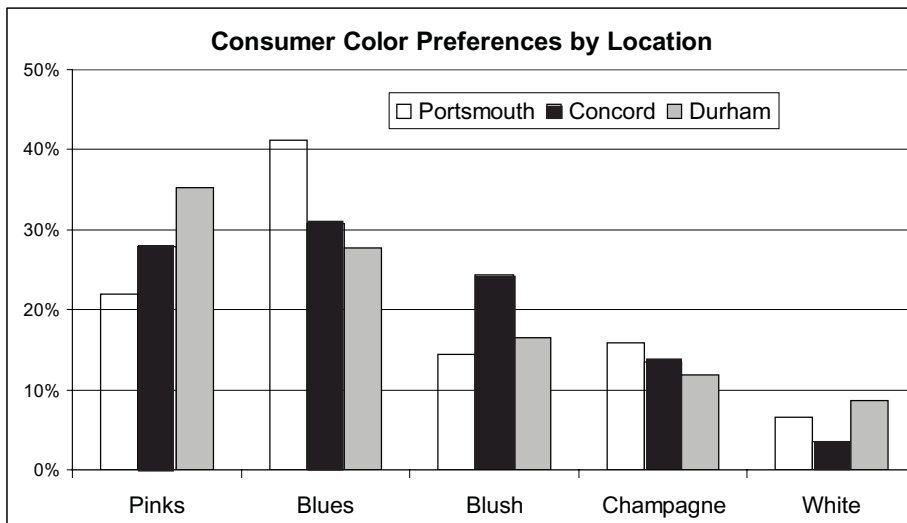


Figure 1.

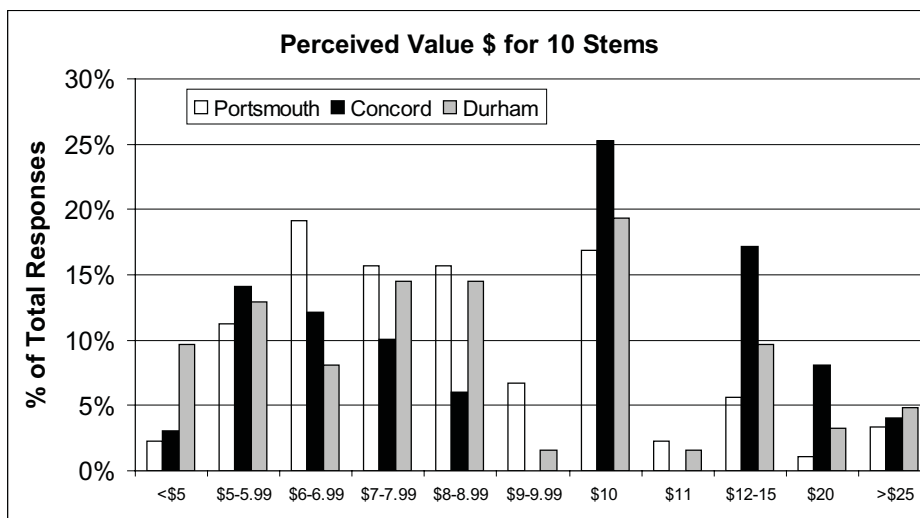


Figure 2.

Fall Turf Care

Every fall people call the county Extension offices and ask "I know I'm supposed to do something with my lawn in the fall, but what?" I imagine the garden centers get the same question. Here are a few tips to share with your customers to help promote responsible turf management without losing a sale.

1) Fall is the best time to fertilize the lawn. If customers have a lot of Kentucky bluegrass in their lawn, they can apply up to one pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet in the early fall, which would be around Labor Day, and again in the late fall. Most people can do with a much lower rate, especially if they have a lot of clover in their yard, a lot of fescue type grasses, or high organic matter in their soil. Customers always ask "what does late fall mean?" The last application of fertilizer can be applied two weeks after the last mowing. People in the North Country may find this is around Halloween, whereas in the Southern part of the state this could be around Thanksgiving.

2) Be sure customers have had a soil test. This will give you an idea of whether or not you should sell them lime, and also determine what type of fertilizer they should purchase. If they don't have a soil test, sell them one of the soil test kits Extension put together. Order online at extension.unh.edu/agric/AGNLT/NLTGC.htm. If they check the "organic" recommendations, then they will be told how much organic matter their soil has and can reduce the amount of nitrogen they apply accordingly.

3) One way you can set your garden center apart from some of the other businesses in town is by offering lawn fertilizer that does not contain phosphorus. Extension recommends it in their soil tests, so customers will be asking for it. We also recommend turf fertilizers that have almost equal amounts of potassium as nitrogen. I've seen a lot of lawn fertilizers that have too much nitrogen and not a lot of potassium.

4) Sell them perennials. If someone comes in and tells you they have an area of their lawn where the grass just won't seem to grow and they ask you for some advice on herbicides and fertilizer. Sell them perennials instead. They have a better chance of surviving and you'll probably have a repeat customer.

Sadie Puglisi

UNH Cooperative Extension Hires New Greenhouse Floriculture Specialist

Dr. Brian Krug was hired as the new greenhouse/floriculture extension specialist. Brian will receive his Ph.D. in horticulture from North Carolina State University in December. He plans to start his new job in January of 2008.

Brian comes with a very diverse background. He was raised on a farm in Iowa and has had horticultural work experiences with Yoder Brothers, Dejong Greenhouses (Iowa), and Ball Holland. While at NC State, he gained significant experience in research and extension. Brian is very well qualified for our extension specialist position and will fill an important role as part of the UNHCE Ornamentals Team. He was the unanimous choice of the search committee. We are pleased to welcome Brian and his wife to New Hampshire.

Stan Swier

New England Grows Announces Exciting New Format For 2008

BOSTON, Mass. New England Grows, the Northeast's largest Green industry exposition and educational conference, has announced an enhanced format for the 2008 show. Recently named the fastest growing association-sponsored show in the U.S. and Canada by Tradeshow Week magazine, New England Grows 2008 will be held Wednesday, February 6 through Friday, February 8 at the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center in Boston, Mass.

The new format includes an opening day devoted to New England Grows' trademark educational program, including an exciting keynote address, and a brand-new networking reception on the tradeshow floor to launch the event on Wednesday afternoon. Extended exhibit hours on both Thursday and Friday, along with a streamlined educational program on those days, will enhance the experience for visitors and exhibitors alike.

"New England Grows is an essential event for anyone doing business in the Northeast's booming Green Industry," said Greg Schaan, president of New England Grows. "We are committed to providing the highest-caliber learning experience with the best ideas, trends and technology in the industry today."

New England Grows 2007 attracted a record-breaking crowd of more than 15,000 professionals from every seg-

ment of the Green Industry. The event's steady growth has reflected the boom in New England's environmental horticulture industry. Over a three-year period, the industry grew by 15 percent annually as measured by the most recent Economic Impact Study published by the University of Vermont and University of Maine. At \$4.6 billion in size, it includes more than 10,500 firms that employ an estimated 148,000 people.

New England Grows is an educational partnership between the New England Nursery Association, Associated Landscape Contractors of Massachusetts, Massachusetts Arborists Association, Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape Association, and its network includes more than 30 allied Green Industry organizations. For more information, please visit www.NEGrows.org.

Upcoming Events

Thurs.- Oct. 4 and 11, 2007.

Landscaping at the Water's Edge: An Ecological Approach to Landscaping Shoreland Property

This is a workshop for landscapers, conservation commissions, lakes associations and others who are in the business of developing, maintaining, or preserving shoreland properties. The program is open to everyone that is concerned about the impacts of landscaping on water quality. Topics cover water movement and drainage on landscape sites, soil quality, site analysis and erosion control, ecological landscape design principles, plant selection and planting, low impact lawns and a hands-on exercise in landscape design and improvement. The workshop will be held at the Meredith Community Center on October 4th and 11th from 8:00 am to 3:30 pm. The cost is \$125.00. For more information contact Suzanne Hebert at 862-3200 or suzanne.hebert@unh.edu. Or register online at <http://extension.unh.edu/H20Edge.htm>



Thurs. Nov. 8, 2007. Garden Center Workshop: Eco-Friendly Garden Centers. UNH Cooperative Extension and the NH Plant Growers Association are co-sponsoring a 1-day workshop in November. The workshop will start with an open house at Cole Gardens in Concord from 8am to 9am, and then adjourn to the Common Man Restaurant in Concord. The theme for the workshop is the Eco-Friendly Garden Centers. Featured topics include Paul Tukey on transitioning to organic turf, Scott La Fleur from the New England Wildflower Society on easy to grow natives with curb appeal, Drs. Cheryl Smith and Stan Swier on eco-friendly pest control products, a garden center owner on what it's like to "go green" and Dr. Cameron Wake from UNH on global warming. Cost is \$35 for the day. For more information contact Margaret Hagen at 641-6060 or margaret.hagen@unh.edu.

Tues-Thurs. Dec 11-13, 2007. New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference. Center of NH Radisson Hotel, Manchester, NH. Three days of fruit, vegetable, and flower information, networking, tradeshow, and much more. Visit <http://www.nevbc.org/> for the most up-to-date information.

Weds January 16, 2008. NH Plant Growers Association and NH Landscape Association. Joint Winter Meeting, Concord, NH. For information call NHPGA @292-5238 or visit NHLA at <http://www.nhlaonline.org/index.shtml>

This newsletter is a cooperative effort of the Ornamentals Extension Educators and Specialist at the University of New Hampshire. It is published quarterly. Its purpose is to inform and update industry members on issues and research to the production, use and maintenance of ornamentals and turf in New Hampshire.

Contributors for this issue:

Cathy Neal, Extension Specialist, Nursery and Landscape Horticulture
Sadie Puglisi, Extension Educator, Merrimack County
Stan Swier, Extension Specialist, Entomology
Geoffrey Njue, Extension Educator, Strafford County

Address corrections, additions and deletions should be sent to Suzanne Hebert
Email: suzanne.hebert@unh.edu, fax: 603-862-2717, phone: 603-862-3200

The use of trade names in this newsletter is for information purposes only and does not constitute endorsement of the product names or discrimination against products not specifically mentioned.