



CUT FLOWER CENTRE OPEN DAY 26th August 2010

**Rookery Farm
Joys Bank
Holbeach St Johns
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE12 8SG**

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 2010 Cut Flower Centre open day at Rookery Farm where the CFC is now firmly established in its second year on this dedicated site. Just like the whole of the industry we have had to contend with the extremes of the weather this year ranging from gale force winds when we wanted to skin the tunnels in weeks 13, scorching temperatures and drought through June and July and now an overabundance of rain in August. The weather has favoured some crops and the lisianthus have thrived in the heat but the sunflower crops have not responded well to the drought.

However despite the weather, the 2010 trials have achieved a number of positive results which we hope will be of benefit to the industry as a whole. As well as ultimately producing production protocols, the CFC is also a valuable resource for providing samples for our customers, especially for supermarket buyers. Samples from the trials have been sent far and wide (including to Holland!!!) and numerous visits have been made to the CFC site by technologist and buyers.

Now that we have the security of 3 years of funding we are able to plan for the future and develop a longer term strategy. The planting of a wide range of foliage crops is a good example of the longer term crops that we are now able to develop. However, the CFC is there to help you to develop your business and we hope that you will give us your ideas and input into what trials we should be developing next year and beyond. Please feel free to discuss your ideas with either the HDC or any member of the CFC Management group.

The CFC Management Group

September 2010

HDC is a division of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board

TRUMPET ANTIRRHINUM

Purpose of trial:- To demonstrate new varieties of “trumpet” Antirrhinum.

Plant supplier:- Florensis.

Planting date:- Week 14.

Harvesting Date:- Week 22 & week 28 (second flush).

Results / Observations to date:- Fantastic quality (bunches of six weighed 310 to 320 gms and were 66cm long), had good vase life (up to 15 days) unusual flower form and unexpectedly produced a second flush of flowers five weeks later. While not so tall or heavy, the second flush produced stems of a marketable quality (bunches of 6 weighed 285 to 305 gms with a stem length of 55 cm). At the moment they are only available in red white and yellow.



LISIANTHUS (EUSTOMA)

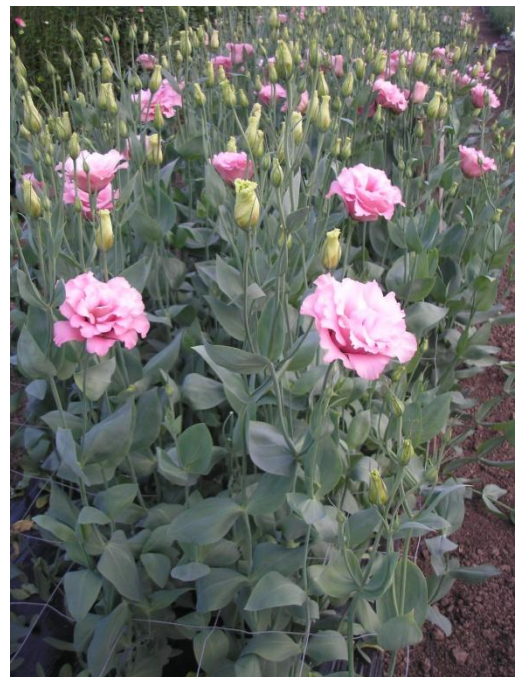
Purpose of trial:- to attempt to produce a short summer crop of lisianthus in Spanish tunnels.

Plant supplier:- Florensis.

Planting date:- Week 18, 19 & 20.

Harvesting Date:- From week 30 onwards (still cropping at time of open day).

Results / Observations to date:- Fantastic quality, superb stem strength and no disease problems. However, the weather has been perfect for lisianthus and the tunnel has side skirts and doors. Stems were broken off when the doors were left open in windy weather. Trial needs repeating in 2011 to see the affect of a different season and other varieties.



GERMAN ASTERS

Purpose of trial:- to determine earliest planting date under tunnels, compare Krallen and Gala, investigate the use of plant growth regulators, compare UK block propagated against Dutch plugs and look at a wide range of varieties within the Standby, Benary Princess and Matador range.

Plant supplier:- Florensis & Combinations.

Planting date:- Week 16 to 23.

Harvesting Date:- From week 29 onwards (still cropping at time of open day).

Results / Observations to date:- Owing to the different facets of the trial the observations have been presented against the headings for the individual objectives of the trial

Planting date – the cultivars in the trial can be planted from week 16 onwards (in Spanish tunnels) but the early plantings produce vigorous tall growth that will need to be treated with plant growth regulators

Plant growth regulators – this will need fine tuning but early observations indicate that applications of B9 need to start early in the life of the crop and 3 or 4 applications may be required.

Comparison of Krallen & Gala – both this year and last year's trial have indicated that Krallen is superior to Gala. This is because Gala has smaller flowers, taller but thinner (weaker) stems and seems to be more prone to pests and diseases (especially aphids). However, it will be for individual growers to determine what varieties are best for them.

Wider variety trial – a wide range of varieties of Standby, Benary Princess and Matador series have been grown both in the tunnel and outdoors. The potential for these varieties will need to be assessed by growers, marketing companies and end consumers.

UK block propagated versus Dutch plug propagated – the UK block propagated plants performed as well (if not better) than the plug propagated plants and were slightly earlier (owing to the original plants being larger). A secondary trial showed that the blocks can simply be laid on the ground (as per AYR chrysanthemums) and do not need to be buried in the ground providing the plants are kept well watered.



PHLOX

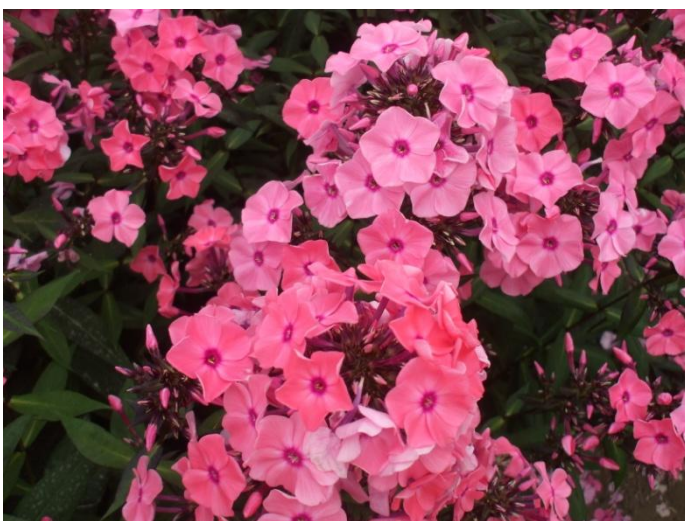
Purpose of trial:- To demonstrate the potential of the crop in the UK.

Plant supplier:- Bartels Stek.

Planting date:- 2009.

Harvesting Date:- Week 27 to 31.

Results / Observations to date:- Superb quality which is far superior to an outdoor crop. The trial has been used this year to provide high quality samples to show to supermarket buyers.



KARMA DAHLIAS

Purpose of trial:- to improve the vase life of Karma Dahlias in an attempt to develop them into a supermarket flower.

Plant supplier:- Keep Smiling BV (breeder is Gebr Verwer)

Planting date:- Week 28.

Harvesting Date:- Not yet cropped.

Results / Observations to date:- Too early to obtain any results because the plugs were planted very late owing to difficulty in sourcing the cuttings. However the work will continue in association with Crysyl.



ASTER ERICOIDES (September Flowers)

Purpose of trial:- to demonstrate new varieties both as a single stem, and a pinched crop (outdoors and under tunnels).

Plant supplier:- Armada.

Planting date:- Week 18 in tunnels and week 20 outdoors.

Harvesting Date:- Not yet flowering.

Results / Observations to date:- Crops are producing numerous strong stems but will not be flowering for a couple of weeks or so. The single stem crop will be too tall and needs to be blacked out to take advantage of the day length response of the crop (they flower in long days). Most of these varieties are double varieties and are completely new to the UK market. Assessments of their market potential will be made once the crop is flowering. The protected crop is far superior to the outdoor crop.



SUNFLOWERS

Purpose of trial:- to investigate new dwarf varieties and the possibility of the use of plant growth regulators to facilitate mechanical harvesting.

Seed supplier:- Various.

Sowing date:- Week 24, 25 & 26.

Harvesting Date:- Not yet flowering.

Results / Observations to date:- The new dwarf glasshouse varieties (Premier Lemon and Light Yellow) will not produce a marketable crop. The extreme drought has also affected severely affected the last two plantings and they are unlikely to make a marketable stem length. This trial will need to be revisited in 2011.

ORNAMENTAL BRASSICA

Purpose of trial:- To compare a plug planted crop with a direct drilled crop. This trial is being undertaken on a local nursery.

Seed supplier:- Combinations.

Sowing date:-

Harvesting Date:- Not yet flowering.

Results / Observations to date:- Too early give a final assessment but early observations of the direct drilled crop look encouraging.

HARDY FOLIAGE

Purpose of trial:- To demonstrate the potential for hardy foliage production in the UK.

Seed supplier:- Kolster BV

Planting date:- Week 18.

Harvesting Date:- Will not start cropped until next year.

Results / Observations:- Most subjects have established well but will not produce any useful stems until next year. Other subjects will be planted in the autumn.