

Harvesting Alaska Peonies



Introduction



- Topics
 - What we did
 - What we have learned
 - Harvesting for sale



Starting off

- Where to begin
 - I had no Idea
- No blueprint for selling Alaska flowers



Prior to Harvesting

- Contact buyers ASAP
 - Especially businesses
 - Helps in harvesting



Disbudding

- ensures max. flower size
- Do it early and often
- Get to know field



Harvesting

- We started cutting last week of June
- Harvested Twice daily 6 days a week
 - More may have been needed
 - Some bloomed on plant



More Harvesting

- Very labor intensive
 - Took an hour for 2 people
- Use clean tools
- Watch for disease
- Mixed plots added difficulty



Crooked Stems

- Leave crooked stems and odd buds on plant
- Only 75% of flowers should be cut
- Stem length/harvest trade-off?



Bud Development

- Lots of research
 - Mixed results
 - Cutting stage can be key
- “marshmallow” stage
 - Very simple
- Example



Development Scale

Stage	Description
1.0	Hard tight bud, little petal color
1.5	Hard Tight bud, slight color
2.0	Firm tight bud, petals showing color
2.5	Slightly softer bud, "squeezable" (Marshmallow stage)
3.0	Loose or soft bud. Outer petal loosening, petals still firm
4.0	Very loose bud, "hollow feel"
5.0	Almost out, petals curved inward
6.0	Open (optimum) petals reflexed
7.0	Petals reflexed and wilted or dropping



Cultivars

Cultivar	Description	Stage
Coral Sunset	Coral Semi-Double	1.5-3.0
Festiva Maxima	White Double	1.5-4.5
Maestro	Red Semi-Double	2.5-4.5
Nick Shaylor	Blush-Pink Double	2.0-3.5
Pink Hawaiian Coral	Pink Semi-Double	1.5-4.0



More Cutting Stage

- Cutting stage depends on the cultivar
 - Also depends on sales
 - Individual trials
- Time to opening
 - Most significant finding



Sorting

- Bunched into fives and tens
- Match stem length and bud size
- Labor intensive
- Organization is important



- Keep track of dates
- Count flowers
- Strip leaves
- Use a cool area
- Package flowers now



Storage

- Cold storage is necessary
 - Remove field heat
 - Store for sale
- Refrigerator, not a good idea



More Cooling

- Ethylene
 - Separate from vegetables
- Modified air-conditioners?
 - Cheaper
- Two stage units?
 - Sorting, and initial cooling



Pulsing

- Water and/or preservative
 - Adds cost
 - Adds handling
- Test results vary
- We didn't do it



Contacting Buyers

- Florists
 - Bring samples
- Wholesalers
 - Difficult to call
 - Try e-mail
 - Some connections made



EBay



- Bunched 5's, 10's, 50's, and 100's
- None got any bids
- Other websites
 - flowerbuyer.com



Farmers Market

- High prices
- Low quantities?
- Networking, raises awareness
- Late cutting stage



More Farmers Market

- Very time consuming
 - wage should be included
- Transport costs
- Equipment and location costs
- Packaging can be cheap
- Market fluctuation



Florists



- Lower prices than farmers market
- Quantities may be higher
- Quality standards will be high



More Florists

- Delivery costs?
- Less Wages
- Market in Fairbanks?
- Insects?
 - Fumigation???



Supermarkets

- Similar florists in prices
- Vary in the way flowers are purchased
 - In house, or nationally
- Big movement in industry



More Supermarket

- Delivery required
- Maintain Flowers on shelf
- Packaging
- UPC bar code
- Not known for quality



Wholesale

- Lowest prices
- Sold to Mayesh Floral Distributors
- Got \$1.25 per stem
- GBG early in season
 - Competition



More Wholesale

- Low costs
- Sell all flowers at once
- World wide integration
- Cut at early stage



Shipping



- Shipped Alaska Air Freight
- Total weight was about 140lb.
- Per stem cost \$0.125





- Dropped off the night before
 - Cold storage at Terminal
- Left FBX at 7am reached L.A. by mid-afternoon
- Cold chain



Packing





- The End

