



# PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

## May 2007 Musings

What a difference a year makes! In March 2006, we had 29 of 31 days with rain of some sort, which really put a damper on early spring growth. This year, we are well below average for precipitation, and have had relatively mild weather.

When the freeze happened on the West Coast in January, many horticultural industries were affected. For the container plant industry, it has been a banner spring. Most nurseries were scrambling to get new crops in to replace those lost from the 5 days of freezing temperatures. Those that succeeded have been rewarded the last few weeks with excellent sales. There is a lack of nursery product in the market and, with the mild weather we have had, people are anxious to get into their gardens and replant any freeze damaged or lost plants. There is nothing like warm weekends to get the retail nursery industry going.

The potted plant industry is also thriving. It seems that the major holidays have all seen strong sales, from Christmas to Valentine's Day and through Easter. Mother's Day has also shaped up to be a good one, and as of this writing, the market is still fairly strong.

Along with good sales in the nursery industry, as one would expect the landscape industry has also picked up and is going strong. Everyone seems to be busy with new projects.

The abundance of sunlight has also resulted in very good growth of cut flowers locally. I attended the annual ICFG (International Cut Flower Growers) meeting held in Niagara Falls this year. With the mild weather we have been having in California, it was a bit of a shock to go back east and find freezing temperatures and snow storms. The East Coast was having a classic Nor'easter type of storm and it wreaked havoc in that part of the country. During the conference, we toured the University of Guelph and found that they are doing some very practical research on current issues such as recycling of nutrient solutions and how to use them safely. They are also the leading research institution on using horticulture in space travel. There are projects to determine the feasibility of growing all of the necessary food—and also providing oxygen—for the long 7-year trip to Mars. Interesting stuff.

During the conference, some folks from South America reported that they are seeing a tight market with many flower farms closing in Columbia. They are sending quite a bit of their product to Russia, which has also helped the domestic growers here. With some luck, this trend will continue and the market will stabilize for us here throughout the year. There is actually a shortage of carnations, especially Miniature Carnations this year. This is a major shift and one that would be welcome. The freezing temperatures that happened in Columbia in early February are contributing to this shortage and the few nurseries that are left in northern California have been able to get very good prices for their product at this time.

The grapevines seem to be getting going as well this year, a bit earlier than last year. Hopefully the late rains we have been having of late will not affect the flower set.

As they say, April showers bring May flowers. Hope this is the case for everyone this year.  
Cliff Low