



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

Fall Newsletter 2010

We are definitely into our fall season as the days are shortening quickly and there is a chill in the morning air. After such a cool growing season this year, it is only fitting that we had a slightly extended hot “Indian Summer”, that is now past. After a summer with the most fog days we have had in quite some time, many a coastal residents suffered from Fog Fever and headed inland for some sunshine. Usually when it is a cooler summer inland, there is less fog on the coast, but not this year. The lower temperatures were both a blessing and curse, depending upon what you were growing. The weather resulted in less production, but generally higher quality for most crops.

The current economic conditions are still thought to be the cause of the slow growth in the commercial markets of most horticultural crops. The cut flower industry had a fairly good spring and then everything flattened out. There have been some reports that there are less imported flowers in the market place and this has helped stabilize and even increase prices for some products.

Reports from the container plant industry indicated a decent spring season and then the summer months were hit and miss. Some clients have had OK sales, but others say it is still fairly slow. The common thread is “It’s about the same or slightly better than last year, but better than being worse”.

The pot plant industry has seen little growth this year and there have been staff reductions at many nurseries. One large nursery on the coast has reduced its production to about 4 crops and laid off as many as 200 workers. The holiday season is again somewhat of an uncertainty with today’s economy. There seems to be about the same number of poinsettias being grown and hopefully they will all sell for a decent price. On an up note, there have not been any widespread problems with poinsettia plants this year. There have been issues of different sorts and as always, each year brings new challenges. On another positive note, the old Yoder facility in Chualar is now being rebuilt by Floricultura-Pacific, a Dutch orchid-propagating firm. This will be the most state of the art greenhouse operation in North America. They hope to start filling it with plants in January and have them ready 18 to 24 months later. Rumor has it that the first crop is already sold.

Business in the landscape industry also continues to be sluggish and with construction somewhat lacking, many companies are doing more maintenance work in order to weather out the economy. There still seems to be a few municipal projects going and small residential jobs, but very few large projects.

Cool weather has had a dramatic effect on the viticulture industry and there are many reports of lost grape crops due to lack of brix, or sugar levels and shriveling from the hot fall weather. As we have had a few days of rain lately, any fruit still on the vines are also subject to greater mold pressure and may be lost for the season.

The economy is reportedly on a slow recovery at this time and we are hoping that the “experts” are wrong and things will get moving soon. This being an election year, we can all hope for new blood and ideas, but it may be “pie in the sky” thinking.

Take care and think positive!
Cliff