



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

Spring 2009

The spring season is off to a slow start this year, as is the economy in general. With overall confidence levels still lower than desirable, the markets also continue to do poorer than we all would like. This is being reflected in most of the horticultural industries that we are involved with.

The weather conditions have not helped either. Since we are still in our third year of low rainfall, water rationing is likely for this season. In the past, this rationing encouraged homeowners to change their landscape to more drought resistant plant materials, which meant that there was a good market for nursery crops and landscaping businesses. With the slow economic times, this is not the case this year and business seems to be slower than normal.

The cut flower nurseries have been slow, which is typical at this time of year. The Valentine's Day holiday was not as bad as most had feared, however. The final tally was that this year was similar to last year, and this is actually a good sign. Everyone is cautiously optimistic that the coming months will be somewhat normal and provide for good sales with the proms, graduations, etc. that usually come with the spring months. Hopefully everyone still will celebrate Mother's Day and buy flowers!

The container nursery industry is still slower than normal and is hoping the economy and housing industries do not go down anymore. There is some good news: the rate of foreclosures has slowed and maybe we are seeing the bottom of this cycle.

The pot plant industry is also feeling the slowing economic times. There is more inventory available and it appears that some of the large stores are canceling pre-booked orders to try and obtain the same product at a lower price at other vendors. There have been some additional plant disease issues and I have recently seen a bad virus infestation in Impatiens, so beware. This may be from infected plant materials and possibly less thrip control due to cost saving moves.

The landscape industry is still slow, and there are many reports of smaller landscape firms laying off a good percentage of their labor since there are not as many jobs available. There are still projects in the works however, and hopefully these will lead to more in the future and there will be enough for everyone. We continue to provide soil testing for landscape architects and designers so this shows that the first phase of these projects continue on and will eventually lead to the construction phase too.

The viticulture industry is still slow, however there has been quite a bit of bud break for the vines in March and this could be another interesting year. The low rainfall will result in lower yields again this year and, if it is like last season, there should be good quality of grapes to make wine with. If we can just avoid the late season frost, there should be adequate fruit for the fall.

As with everyone else, we at Perry Laboratory have tightened our belts and are riding out the slow economy. We have begun offering wine testing for our local wineries and hope this helps them make the fine wines our area is known for.

Here's hoping for a fast economic recovery.

Respectfully,
Cliff Low