



PERRY LABORATORY

HORTICULTURAL ADVISING AND TESTING

Winter 2009

As we start this New Year, I think everyone is of the same mind—that change would be good. Last year seemed to finish with a whimper and much better economic times would be very welcome.

The weather we have been having during December and January has been mild to say the least. There have been a few cold nights, however not that many and the days have been very warm. During the first weeks of January, we have enjoyed daytime temperatures in the mid 70's on the coast. Although the prospect of another low rainfall year is not desirable, we are enjoying this weather and the excellent plant growing conditions. There is no replacement for sunshine.

The cut flower industry has been slow, although there was a brief demand for red roses at the beginning for December, and some growers elected to sell these flowers rather than pinch the shoots for Valentine's Day. Speaking of Valentine's Day, there is cautious optimism for this holiday this year, since it is falling on a 3-day weekend, which is not always the best. The very good growing weather we have had will result in good quality flowers and hopefully the demand will be strong for them.

The container nursery industry is also holding its breath as there is still a lot of product in the growing areas left over from last season. Although there is some new planting, everyone is hoping for some better economic times and rain to help this spring season.

The potted plant industry had a difficult Christmas season. As most report, the poinsettias got sold somehow and at some price, but it was not a good season. This was the first holiday season that I personally saw left over holiday crops that never sold. Hopefully this will be a temporary situation, but only time will tell.

The landscape industry is also slow as it always is at this time of year. However there are not a lot of projects getting booked, so there is also concern in this area.

The viticulture industry is concerned with the great weather we are currently having on the central California coast. It may cause premature bud break and, if there is a frost, there could be a loss of fruit set. Some managers are looking at pruning to longer spurs and then performing a secondary pruning after the initial bud break to help delay the crop and get the flowering past any frost damage. The lack of rainfall is also a concern and there is some speculation that there may be lower yields this year. Hopefully this will result in better fruit quality and ultimately excellent wines.

Let's all hope that our new president gets the economy going soon!

Respectfully,
Cliff