

# *The MAYFLOWER* & Floral Notes

A Joint Publication  
Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association  
& UMass Extension

August 2014

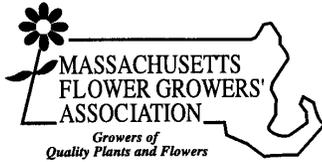
## *MFGA Membership Supports Boston Strong Marathon Daffodil Project*

Beginning in the fall of 2013 a group of horticultural organizations got together and came up with an idea to show support for the victims of the Boston Marathon bombing, but more importantly to show how our Massachusetts community can come together and show our resilience. The idea was to create a path of color along the Boston Marathon route. What better way than to build a path of Daffodils along the route that would be blooming during the marathon. Thousands of daffodil bulbs were sold by Garden Centers to people in and around communities through which the race runs. The bulbs were planted residents' property along the way. Some places did not have planters or ground beds to plant, so the MFGA Board of Directors jumped on board and offered to provide potted daffodils for these spots. Lead by our MFGA President Jason Hutchins a grower was selected to grow over 2000 pots. To pay for the project we asked our Membership to donate over \$5000.

Well, thanks to our members we met our goals and the Marathon Daffodil project was a great success. The race had the highest number of runners in history and our contributions were seen by millions of people. Our efforts were recognized by many. We would like to thank the following members and organizations for their financial support with this project. A job well done!

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Griffin Greenhouse and Nursery Supplies  
Guerrini Landscape

Kennedy's Garden Center  
King Farms  
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Northeast Nurseries  
Pleasant View Gardens  
Randall's Farms  
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# Association News

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*Growers of Quality Plants and Flowers*

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## 2014 Mayflower Recognition

The following members are recognized for their contributions to MFGA beyond their membership dues. Well done and thank-you!

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## Mayflower Ad Renewal Reminder

Just a reminder, it's time to renew your ad or place a new ad in *The Mayflower*. Thanks to those who have already renewed or placed a new ad!

Advertising in *The Mayflower* is an exclusive benefit for MFGA members only. *The Mayflower* is published 6 times a year and is sent to all active members of MFGA. Several sizes of ads are available at different annual rates as follows:

Size	Rate
1/8 page	\$120.00
1/4 page	\$210.00
1/2 page	\$360.00

**Note:** You must be an active member in the MFGA to submit an ad. Make your check payable to: "Massachusetts Flower Growers' Association" and send it to:

Douglas Cox  
211 French Hall  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst, MA 01003  
dcox@umass.edu

## ***2014 Plant Something MA Day***

Kim LaFleur

Project Coordinator

Plant Something MA

[www.plantsomethingma.org](http://www.plantsomethingma.org)

Ninety-nine member business, public and private schools, community groups and green industry advocates participated in Plant Something MA Day on May 15<sup>th</sup>. Once again, our members have found creative ways to get involved with the program. From community garden plantings, to planting trees on city property, to working with a group of special needs students at the local high school, and even a “phantom” planting for your friends and town, there was no shortage of clever projects on our special day.

Some of the events were:

- Chelmsford – Weston Nurseries planted fruit trees and blueberry bushes with local Brownies and Boy Scouts at Sunny Meadow Farm. Additionally, Jim Connolly, Garden Center Manager, was featured on the Garden Variety segment on Fox 25 News with Meteorologist Shiri Spears.
- Needham – Volante Farms invited a special-needs class from Needham High School to plant herb raised bed gardens. The herbs will be used in their kitchen throughout the season.
- Westborough – Hi-Hill Farm worked with a local Girl Scout troop for the month leading up to Plant Something MA Day. The girls came to the greenhouse in late March, planted marigold seeds, transplanted marigold seedlings and planted geranium cuttings. They are hoping to plant at the senior center, either on May 15, or soon after that.
- Hi-Hill also donated wax begonia plants, jiffy pots and soil to all the preschoolers at the three Miss Tanya schools in Westborough (about 300 youngsters), so they can plant their own, and put them in their own gardens later in the season.
- Woburn – McCue’s Garden Center invited customers to send them a photograph of a barrel planter in their community that was in need of attention. McCue’s then recommend and donated plants to their customers for a surprise make over planting.

MNLA Executive Director, Rena Sumner, and Plant Something MA Program Coordinator, Kim LaFleur, celebrated the day at the Massachusetts Envirothon. This statewide high school level environmental/natural resources competition took place at beautiful Sholan Farms in Leominster with 250 students from more than 30 Massachusetts communities from Boston to the Berkshires. The theme for was sustainable local agriculture. What better way to celebrate the day than to

plant seeds with an exciting group of young people? We also planted flowers on the city owned farm for visitors to enjoy throughout the season.

Plant Something MA also teamed up with the South Shore Great Pumpkin Challenge program to distribute more than 400 giant pumpkin seedlings to children and families across the state. The seedlings were grown at Quansett Nurseries in South Dartmouth and Bristol County Agricultural High School in Dighton. They were distributed by a variety of garden centers in eastern Massachusetts, as well as at the Envirothon. Thank you to all participants for making this joint project possible.

Another way that Plant Something MA has been increasing consumer awareness is through our presence on social media. We maintain an active role on Facebook and Twitter. For the period of April 15 – May 15, over **14,000** people were reached through targeted advertisements. Would you like to capture part of that audience? Be sure to like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter so we can share your great work too.

Plant Something MA is collaboration between the Massachusetts Nursery & Landscape and the Massachusetts Flower Growers' Associations to build consumer awareness and generate business for you. The program is an *added value to your membership* by helping to drive customers to your place of business. Would you like to get involved? Contact Kim LaFleur, Program Coordinator, [kim@plantsomethingma.org](mailto:kim@plantsomethingma.org), for more information.

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The advertisement features a black and white photograph of five white delivery vans parked in front of a large barn. Each van has the D&D Farms logo and a 'Plant Something MA' sticker on its side. A person is standing in front of the middle van. The barn has a sign that reads 'D&D FARMS' above the entrance.

# Floral Notes *Newsletter*

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July-August 2014

## *In This Issue*

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### *Save the Date!*

#### ***Greenhouse Vegetable Production – In Containers***

**December 10, 2014**

**Publick House, Sturbridge, MA**

**The program will feature:**

- Growing Greenhouse Tomatoes and Greenhouse Cucumbers in Containers
- Biological Control of Pests for Greenhouse Tomatoes, Cukes and Greens
- Growing Bench-top Greens
- Diseases and Disorders of Greenhouse Tomatoes, Cukes and Greens
- Grower to Grower Panel

*University of Massachusetts Extension Greenhouse Crops and Floriculture Program and Vegetable Program*

# *Neonicotinoids, Native Pollinators, and Greenhouse Production*

Tina Smith  
Outreach Educator  
UMass Extension  
Amherst

**Note:** The 2015-2016 New England Greenhouse Floriculture Guide will contain an expanded version of this article. Contributors to the new section of the guide “Protecting Bees and Pollinators from Pesticides” are Dr. Richard Cowles, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Dr. Raymond Cloyd, Kansas State University, Dr. Kimberly Stoner, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station and Dr. Lois Berg Stack, University of Maine. The new guide will be available in November 2015 at the Northeast Greenhouse Conference.

Populations of honey bees and native pollinators have declined worldwide in recent years. According to current research, a wide range of factors have contributed to their decline including parasites, disease, low genetic diversity, poor nutrition, loss of habitat, management stress and pesticides applied to crops.

The current state of honeybee health has been detailed in a joint comprehensive report released by the USDA and EPA: <http://1.usa.gov/1kBLLeJI> (this is case sensitive)

## **About Neonicotinoids**

Concerning the role of pesticides, neonicotinoid insecticides have been implicated as a potential contributing factor. Neonicotinoid insecticides are insect neurotoxicants. They are primarily systemic, which means that the active ingredient may be absorbed by the roots and move through the entire plant including pollen and nectar. There is evidence that foraging bees may receive sublethal doses in pollen and nectar which may make bees more vulnerable to other stressors, or may combine with doses from contact with other treated plant material.

Neonicotinoids are also persistent in the environment and even as they degrade, they remain toxic to bees. Pollinators are particularly vulnerable to exposure to neonicotinoids that are sprayed on open flowers of insect pollinated plants or move systemically into pollen and nectar.

Neonicotinoids that are labeled for greenhouse ornamentals include Group 4 A insecticides: imidacloprid (AmTide Imidacloprid, Benefit, Bounty, Mantra, Mallet, Marathon, Quali-Pro Imidacloprid); thiamethoxam, (Flagship) acetamiprid (TriStar) and dinotefuran (Safari).

One other neonicotinoid, clothianidin, is not currently used in greenhouses, but is used in other green industries. Many neonicotinoid products are also currently available to home gardeners. See the link to the fact sheet “Protecting Honey Bees from Pesticides in Home Gardens and Landscapes” at the end of this article for trade names of products available to home gardeners.

## **Steps to reduce pesticide exposure to pesticides**

Many non-neonicotinoid pesticides are also toxic to bees and native pollinators, including some pesticides used for organic production. Pesticides applied to protect crops can affect pollinators through multiple routes of exposure: direct contact with sprays, contact with treated surfaces, pesticide-contaminated dust or pollen particles that are collected or adhere to the body of the insect (and may be taken back to hive), and ingestion of pesticide-contaminated pollen and nectar.

Growers’ decisions make a difference in the level of exposure of bees and other beneficial insects to pesticides. Taking precautions to minimize pesticide poisoning of pollinators in all crops is an important responsibility of all pesticide applicators.

**Reduce or eliminate the use of neonicotinoid insecticides.** The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or state governments may ban or restrict the use of neonicotinoid insecticides in the future. It has been reported that some mass markets will require neonicotinoid treated plants to be labeled.

Therefore, growers should consider reducing the use of and reliance on neonicotinoid insecticides. Only use neonicotinoid insecticides when other effective products do not exist and use neonicotinoids in ways that are protective of pollinators. Monitor crops for pests and spot-treat pests when they are first observed. Use environmentally sound alternatives whenever possible.

**Avoid treating “Bee Friendly” plants.** Avoid treating plants that are attractive to bees with neonicotinoid insecticides. These include many perennial and native plants and also annual bedding plants. Many retailers now market plants as “Bee Friendly”. These plants should never be treated with neonicotinoids, even during production.

**Timing.** When greenhouses are “opened up” for ventilation, for example side-walls rolled up, be aware of bee activity on plants, especially if pesticide applications are made during the day. Avoid applications when bees are actively foraging in a greenhouse. Make applications in the early morning, late in the day or at night when pollinators are not foraging. Control weeds under benches where bees may forage. Research in European farmland found evidence that honeybees on average forage 1 mile from their hives, but may travel up to 6 miles. Effects would likely be greatest on hives within 1 mile of treated areas and decline for hives further away, as fewer and fewer bees will reach treated areas from distant locations.

**Formulation.** Wettable powders, dusts and microencapsulated products have a greater toxic hazard than emulsifiable concentrates (or other liquid formulation with active ingredient in solution). Products that do not have acute toxicity but could cause injury to immature bees if carried back to the hive should not be applied in particulate form; this may include insect growth regulators.

**Drying time before exposure.** Some products are highly toxic when wet, but much less so after the pesticide is dried. Apply when there will be adequate drying time before pollinator activity.

**Drift.** If applying a pesticide in an outdoor production yard, avoid drift on non-target areas particularly onto clover and other flowering plants including weeds near the yard. Prior to treatment, mow weedy areas to reduce flowers that may be attractive to pollinators. Temperature inversion conditions, wind speed, application equipment characteristics and operator skill may influence drift.

**Pesticide toxicity.** Do not apply insecticides rated as ‘High’ or ‘Moderate’ directly to bees that are actively foraging on blooming crop or weeds. EPA registration includes an acute, single-dose laboratory study designed to determine the quantity of pesticide that causes 50% mortality (LD50) in a test population of bees.

### **Read the label for bee hazard rating**

The EPA recently introduced a label change for insecticides used outdoors that contain one or more of the neonicotinoids in order to protect bees. Some of these pesticides are also be labeled for greenhouse use. Specifically, all insecticides which can be applied as outdoor foliar sprays (not granular) and contain the active ingredients chlothianidin, dinotefuran, imidacloprid or thiamethoxam will contain warning icons and directions for use to minimize impact on pollinators. The Bee Hazard warning (see below) will be placed in the Environmental Hazards section of the pesticide label.



The EPA bee toxicity groupings and label statements are as follows:

**High (H)** Bee acute toxicity rating: LD50 = 2 micrograms/bee or less. The label has the following statement: "This product is highly toxic to bees and other pollinating insects exposed to direct treatment or residues on blooming crops or weeds. Do not apply this product or allow it to drift to blooming crops or weeds if bees or other pollinating insects are visiting the treatment area." If the residues phrase is not present, this indicates that the pesticide does not show extended residual toxicity.

**Moderate (M)** Product contains any active ingredient(s) with acute LD50 of greater than 2 micrograms/bee, but less than 11 micrograms/bee. Statement: "This product is moderately toxic to bees and other pollinating insects exposed to direct treatment or residues on blooming crops or weeds. Do not apply this product if bees or other pollinating insects are visiting the treatment area."

**Low (L)** All others. No bee or pollinating insect caution required.

In addition, specific use restrictions are placed in the "Directions for Use section." See the full EPA text: <http://www2.epa.gov/pollinator-protection/new-labeling-neonicotinoid-pesticides> .

### References and Resources

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- Stoner K. Planting Flowers for Bees in Connecticut. [http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/publications/fact\\_sheets/entomology/planting\\_flowers\\_for\\_bees\\_in\\_connecticut.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/documents/publications/fact_sheets/entomology/planting_flowers_for_bees_in_connecticut.pdf)
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- The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. <http://www.xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/>
- USDA Report on the National Stakeholder Conference on Honey Bee Health, National Honey Bee Health Stakeholder Conference Steering Committee. 2013. <http://www.ars.usda.gov/news/docs.htm?docid=15572>
- White A. <http://pollinorgardens.org/>

Fact Sheet available to be printed and distributed to home gardeners. "Protecting Honey Bees from Pesticides in Home Gardens and Landscapes" <http://ag.umass.edu/fact-sheets/home-lawn-garden/protecting-bees-and-pollinators-pesticides-home-gardens-and-landscapes>

# ***Can Raising the Level (ppm N) of Liquid Organic Fertilizers Optimize Plant Growth Relative to Chemical Water-soluble Fertilizer?***

Douglas Cox  
Stockbridge School of Agriculture  
University of Massachusetts  
Amherst

Many growers and researchers who try organic fertilizers see less growth with the organics compared to chemical water-soluble fertilizer when they applied at the same level (ppm N). The question is, would simply raising the level of the organic fertilizer stimulate plant growth enough to make up for the difference in growth compared to chemical fertilizer? This is an important question because the answer would affect the amount of fertilizer used (cost, waste, nutrient pollution) and the chance of injuring the plants (ammonium toxicity, high EC).

## **How the plants were grown**

'First Lady' marigolds and 'Ringo 2000' seed geranium plugs sown 22 March 2014 were potted on 7 April and 17 April, respectively, in 4½-inch pots of Fafard 3B soilless mix. Plants were fertilized with 225 ppm N from Plantex (20-2-20) chemical fertilizer or Nature's Source (3-1-1) liquid plant extract fertilizer levels of 225, 250, 275 or 300 ppm N. Fertilizer was applied at every other watering or about twice a week. The marigold portion of the experiment ended 3 June and the geranium portion ended on 17 June. Plants height was measured on the day when the experiments ended.

## **Results**

**'Ringo 2000' geraniums.** The tallest geraniums resulted from fertilizing with Plantex fertilizer (Table 1). Plantex plants were larger than plants fertilized with Nature's Source at the same level, 225 ppm N. Nature's Source plants increased in size with 275 and 300 ppm N, but plants were still markedly smaller than plants in the Plantex treatment. Flower bud development was not greatly affected by Nature's Source and no chlorosis due to ammonium toxicity developed on any of the geraniums.

**Table 1.** Plant height as affected by fertilizer and fertilizer level.

<b>Fertilizer</b>	<b>ppm N</b>	<b>Geranium</b>	<b>Marigold</b>
Plantex 20-2-20	225	14.3a	11.0 <sup>BS</sup>
Nature's Source 3-1-1	225	9.1d	10.4
Nature's Source 3-1-1	250	9.2d	10.7
Nature's Source 3-1-1	275	11.2bc	10.9
Nature's Source 3-1-1	300	10.3cd	11.2

**Figure 1.** Geranium fertilized with (L to R) Plantex 225 ppm N, Nature's Source 225 ppm N, Nature's Source 275 ppm N.



**‘First Lady’ marigold.** In past experiments, depending on the organic fertilizer, marigolds were either slightly smaller or significantly so than with chemical fertilizer. Here there were no differences in size between plants fertilized with Plantex and those with Nature’s Source (Figure 2). Also, there were no increases in height or differences in appearance with fertilizer levels above 225. No abnormalities developed on plants fertilized with Nature’s Source. In short, all of the marigolds turned out the same in this experiment.



**Figure 2.** (L to R). Plantex 225 ppm N, Nature’s Source 225, 250, 275, and 300 ppm N.

## Conclusions

In my opinion, the results of this experiment show that it’s questionable practice to try raise the level of organic fertilizer to compensate for the reduced growth compared to chemical fertilizers often observed by growers and researchers. However, if you do it and feels it’s a successful strategy in your greenhouse, carry on! In my work raising the level was partially successful with geraniums and not at all with marigold a plant, like many others, that responds well to Nature’s Source fertilizer. Applying Nature’s Source fertilizer to marigolds at levels above 225 would be a waste of fertilizer.

Another lesson from this experiment is that it’s probably safe to say that how plants respond to current organic fertilizers is species-specific. Look at the difference between geraniums and marigolds in their response to Nature’s Source fertilizer. This emphasizes the importance of trialing these new fertilizers on a small scale with the plants you grow before applying them to your whole crop.

## ***Spray Coverage is Key for Effective Treatment Results in Greenhouse***

Tom Dudek, Michigan State University Extension

Greenhouse growers need to understand proper spray application coverage when applying pesticides and growth regulators to ensure successful treatment results.

Greenhouse growers often are heard complaining that they aren't getting uniform control of an insect or disease, or that a plant growth regulator has been erratic- some plants affected, while others not at all or very little. Michigan State University Extension states that in many of these cases, the problem isn't the pesticide or plant growth regulator; it turns out that the material was not applied uniformly or didn't get to where the problem was located

.While many products will move from the top of a leaf to the bottom or from a leaf into the stem, it's unrealistic to expect these materials to move from one side of the plant to the other, from one leaf to another or from one plant to another. However, that's what must happen if foliar sprays or drenches aren't uniformly applied. Plant growth regulators like paclobutrazol (Bonzi, Piccolo, Paczol) and uniconazole (Sumagic) don't move out of leaves, but the site of action is the stem and meristem of the plant. Avid, an insecticide, moves from one surface of the leaf to the other, but not from leaf to leaf. Imidicloprid (Marathon, Mallet), another insecticide, moves up into the plant from roots, but not down from treated leaves . The control material you are applying must come into contact with the pest, or in the case of growth regulators, the growing sites, before anything good can occur.

Penetration into the leaf canopy of greenhouse crops can be a major headache. Unless there is very good air movement, when plants are widely spaced or the canopy hasn't yet filled in, foggers, air blast sprayers, smokes or spray applications that don't flip over leaves will deposit material mostly on the top surface of the upper leaves; relatively little penetrates deep into the canopy or to the underside of the lowest leaves. Changing the spray droplet does increase canopy penetration, but the leaves must still be flipped over by the force of the spray for optimal coverage of the lower surfaces. Applications must be made from several directions in order to hit leaves shielded by other leaves or other plants. This type of application method will greatly improve insect and disease control in crops with dense canopies.

Droplet size is also a key to coverage of the plant surface and penetration into unfolding leaves and other hiding places. The smaller the average droplet size, the greater the coverage, and penetration. Droplet size is directly dependent upon the type of nozzle, the nozzle size and the pump pressure. Generally speaking, the higher the pump pressure, the greater the proportion of small droplets in the spray pattern. Growers need to check that the nozzles you're using are of the correct pattern and size, aren't worn and that the pump is providing the necessary pressure. Many growers change nozzles every year to insure good coverage. For good coverage of plant leaves, hollow cone nozzles are much better than flat fan nozzles. Also, watch for dripping nozzles because that means they are plugged.

Very small droplets tend to float in the air rather than fall out on to the leaf surface and don't move long distances. Larger droplets fall out readily and can be sprayed long distances, but don't cover the surface as well. While using a "hand gun" and spraying only from the center aisle may be convenient for you, the plants on the outer edges of the houses are only being reached by very large droplets, so a great deal of the surface is wide open to pest attack.

Uniform application is also dependent upon the amount of the spray or drench used. Drenching with too small a volume of solution per container means that part of the media might not be saturated and any roots in this area won't take up the material. On the other hand, applying too much solution can cause overdosing and phytotoxicity. Applying ultra-concentrated materials is convenient because the application equipment is light and can be easily moved, but applying very small amounts of materials uniformly over large areas is tricky.

The bottom line is that no material will work as well as it could unless it is applied uniformly and to the proper area. Don't let the pressure of everything else that must be done this season cause you to take shortcuts in pesticide and growth regulator applications; you are really wasting valuable time and may put the crop at risk.

This article was published by Michigan State University Extension. For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. Be sure application method, application rate, and target pest are consistent with pesticide label use.

### ***Chris Betyes, Keynote Speaker at Greenhouse Conference & Expo***

Join Chris Betyes, Editor of GrowerTalks at the **Northeast Greenhouse Conference & Expo**, Thursday, November 6 at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield, Massachusetts for his keynote presentation, "Acres Online Live."

Do you get the weekly email newsletter Acres Online from Chris Betyes? Almost 27,000 industry insiders from around the world depend on his news and insights to help them keep up with the fast-paced world of professional horticulture.

Chris combines 30 years of industry experience, professional journalism skills and a wry sense of humor to keep it informative, fact-filled and fun. And now he's live! In Acres Online Live, Chris will share the latest horticulture industry trends from around the world New England, North America and the world—the most timely information you need for the coming season. From downy mildew in the U.S., floral trends from Europe and more, Chris will cover the gamut. And you can expect a few things he wouldn't dare put in print!

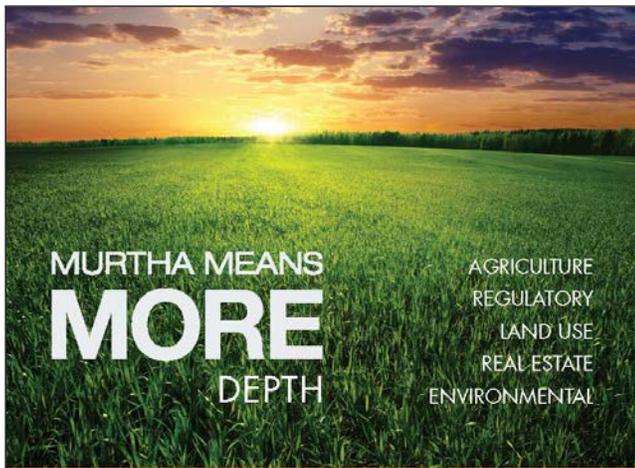
For more information about the Northeast Greenhouse Conference & Expo and keynote presenter Chris Betyes, visit: [www.negreenhouse.org](http://www.negreenhouse.org).

### ***UMass Greenhouse Crops and Floriculture Extension Program***

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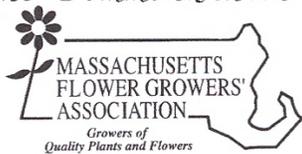
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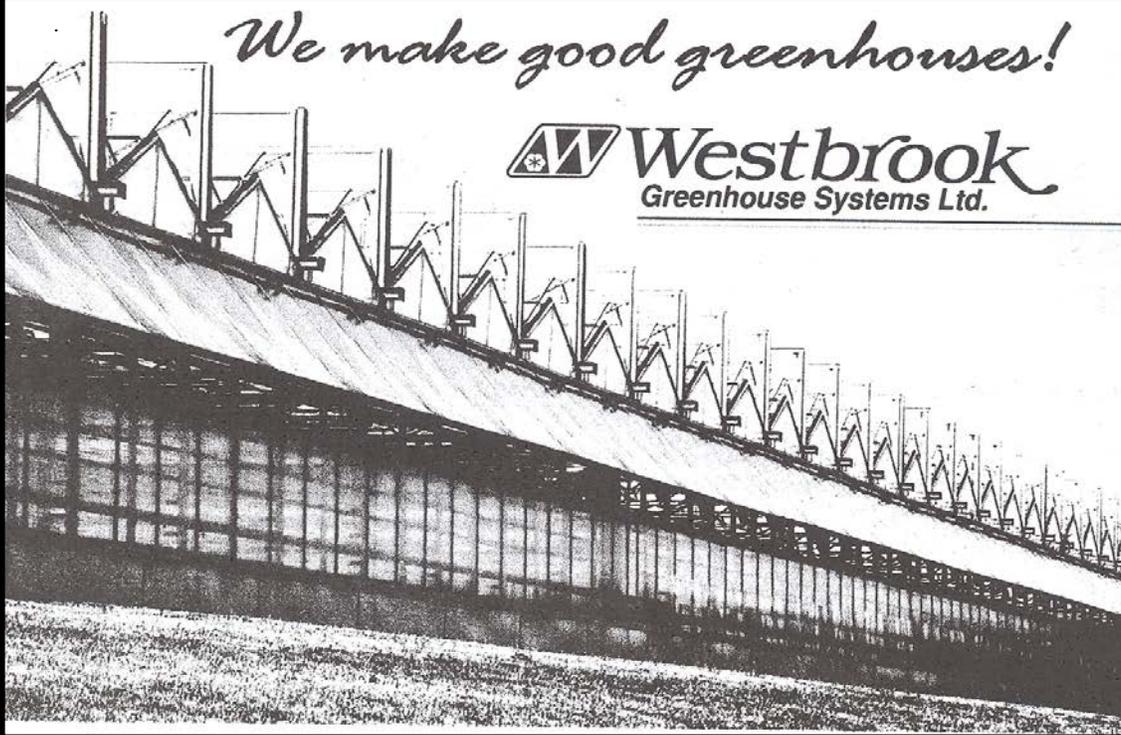
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