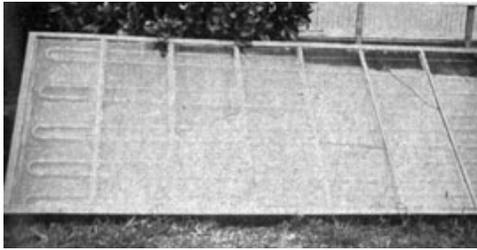


A Look Back: Doing More With Less

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Featured in June 1937

Floriculture in Florida

... A noteworthy system of heating water for homes is in use down here known as solar heating. For an average home, it consists of a box about 6 x 8 ft. and 8 in. deep. This is coated inside with a black asphalt material and contains coils of copper pipes that are connected with the regular water supply on one end and a well insulated supply tank on the other. This box is glazed tight and located usually on the roof of a home, or where well exposed to the sun that heats the interior of the box and water in the pipes to the point where you can not

bear your hand in it,—close to 200 [degrees]. It seems to us this principle could be made some use of farther north. R.D. Cooper, a grower of Melbourne, utilizes the same idea, without pipes, to provide bottom heat for his propagating bed for warm house stock. ...—George J. Ball

pictured: After his travels to visit some Florida growers, George J. Ball took this photo: "A solar water heating outfit that traps enough Florida sun to heat water in the pipes to 200 [degrees]."

George J. Ball opines about avoiding waste in January 1943:

... there is the much talked about subject of short cuts in greenhouse operations. We feel pretty safe in saying that most greenhouse work could be reduced 10-15%. It would, of course, be much easier to say how for any individual business if one could analyze it in operation. We have been inclined to look with suspicion on efficiency experts, or people whose business it is to study short cuts in the work of offices and factories. One's first that [sic] is that management is in the best possible position to do this but it doesn't always seem to work out that way. A man who is trained in this work, especially one with practical experience in it, becomes more appreciative of the cumulative value of small savings in labor than the manager who is with it continuously. Anyhow, that is the argument. Large institutions such as Sears Roebuck have such trained men continually studying the problem of short cuts and the simplifying of operations. In our office of 50-60 girls and boys, we know there is some undue waste. Making changes under the direction of an outsider might be acceptable to employees than when made by the management directly. It is lack of appreciation of the sum total of small losses that sometimes hurts us. ...

... In our warehouse we find another time saving outfit in operation that is worth note. This concerns a gravity operated carrier. The small wheels that do the work rest on heavily greased ball bearings. This enables a slight incline to keep the load rolling. ... All costs connected with it amount to about \$2.50 per running foot, or did 2 years back. Outside of occasional greasing, we have met with no upkeep or repair costs. For unloading plant bands from cars anywhere in the warehouse, we find the labor cost reduced to 1/3 of what it formerly was; so we have reason to be well satisfied. ... The subject of time saving has possibilities that are a challenge to wide-awake greenhouse men.



Featured in the May 1968 issue

Fill 'Em, Plant 'Em, Sell 'Em by Darrell Messick

—that's what they do at Kurtz Farms, Cheshire, Connecticut. Earl Kurtz and his sons, Earl, Jr. and Hugh, have found it necessary to automate everywhere possible and the filling of flats is a good start. ...

pictured left: Hugh Kurtz (left) checks the soil level on their flats with his brother Earl, Jr. circa 1968. Right: Darrell Messick wrote, "A Tag-Along in every pack grown at Kurtz Farms."

... Mr. Kurtz and his sons must feel there is a future in plant growing as they just put up three more houses 40 x 200 each this spring.

Four thousand flats planted in less than two days—makes a full house.

One major topic at the Ohio Short Course in 1955 was greenhouse cooling. Phil Jones wrote that many of the growers in attendance

traveled to the event just for this discussion.

... Steve Ray of Furrow and Company—in his usual direct “down-to-earth” style—made the case for fan-pad cooling. It rested squarely on \$\$—spent, and taken in. Furrows (Steve is manager) cooled 225,000 sq. ft. of glass between their ranges at Guthrie and Oklahoma City. This cost \$28,600—plus operating costs (electricity for fans, etc.) for a total of \$32,335. As a result of this cooling, their sales for July, August and September of '55 were \$43,000 greater than for the comparable period in '54. In other words, increased sales directly resulting from the cooling more than paid for the equipment in one summer! ...

... Steve figures that, counting in all installation and operating costs, depreciating equipment over 5 years, pad-fan cooling costs 5.4 [cents] per sq. ft. per year.

Other advantages cited by Steve:

1. Less frequent watering on Pot Mums; 25% difference, at least.
2. Employees accomplished more, better morale, much less turnover of summer help.
3. Actually, cooling put them back into summer production of Mums—without it, they would have virtually discontinued all summer flowering.
4. Steve reported definite improvement on Hydrangeas, Lilies, Azaleas, Caladiums, Violets, Poinsettias (no harm from draft; cooling kept them shorter, more stocky).
5. They were able to reduce their summer shade on Mums. Before cooling, they shaded to allow only 4,000 fc to hit the crop—now it's 5,500 fc. More light, more growth, better quality. ...



Ray Novak of Ponca Floral Company in Ponca City, Oklahoma, wrote a letter to GrowerTalks in response, which Vic published in the April 1955 issue. Like Ray, some growers were having a problem cooling a block of furrow houses that have a service building that is connected to one end of a greenhouse. Ray installed a 7 ft. high by 255 ft. long pad along the full length of the south end of the range, with the fans built into the ceiling. The photos show Ray standing in the cool pads framework and the cooling fan installed up on the roof bars.

Featured in May 1973, taken from the article “How Bernacchi Cut Labor Cost 20%” written by Vic Ball, which focused on the different ways Bob Bernacchi cut his overall labor costs within five years:

... Hand watering is used for several weeks to get the plants established. Soon, though, the overhead spray is used. By late April to early May, it is all done with nozzles. And again, the point about, “When you irrigate with overhead nozzles, you’ve got to really shoot it to them. We give bedding plants often as much as 25 minutes of feed/water at a time. A little hand watering is needed, especially at first, but as we get into May, a thorough application of the overhead nozzles usually does the trick.”



- Want to gain 15% more growing space next spring? Just use every other aisle—as Bernacchis are doing with these 4-inch geraniums. Most crops can be grown very well in these “9-foot beds,” but you must use automatic irrigation/feeding, automatic black-cloth application (for mums).

- Bedding plants get the same treatment—use every other aisle to gain growing space, note the 1 by 2 laid on edge over ground-bed sideboard. Cell-Paks are the backbone of bedding plants here. New 50,000-square-foot range, Dutch style, double poly, going up this spring to accommodate expansion in bedding plants. **GT**