

PARTNERS FOR PROFIT

IDEAS AND INFORMATION FOR THE FARMERS' MARKETS OF AMERICA

“LIFESTYLE” PLANTS AT THE MARKET...



Do you realize that for the majority of Americans, “gardening” is a dirty word? The problem is (according to a recent survey) that gardening implies more work, and today’s busy home owners do not want more work in their lives – they want someone to do it for them. That is why the landscaping business is booming now.

You are wondering...how does this apply to Farmers’ Markets? Well, when you think about it, your customers are coming to your market to purchase your goods because they do not want to take the time and effort

to grow it themselves. Not only are they looking for the finest healthy, fresh, locally grown vegetables, they are interested in potted plants they can take home and put on the windowsill.

Another recent survey pointed out that the majority of these buyers are women, and they are most happy to buy a single potted plant in full bloom. The plant only has to be viable for 21 days or so, and they are willing to buy another...now that is good news for your market.

Find yourself some 4” to 6” decorative pots (an important part of the lifestyle sales process) and grow some showy annuals in these *single plant* pots for some additional sales in spring, summer and fall. Dwarf sunflowers, pansies and violas are always very popular with consumers, and there are a bunch of other species that will do well in pots. The sky’s the limit!

For a complete discussion on “Lifestyle Plants”, please refer to our **2008 Harris Seeds Professional Ornamental Growers’ Catalog...** call us, it’s free (800-544-7938).



ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN PRODUCE

Take a look at the diversity of the shoppers at your Market, and then take a look at your product line. Is there a good Market match? Depending on your specific location, you may find that ethnic produce can be a big hit at your booth.

Many growers are adding to traditional vegetable species with a touch of specialty crops to set their Farmers’ Market apart from others. By example, if you have a large African American clientele, you may want to consider offering okra, collard and turnip greens to your product line. Asian shoppers might be looking for baby vegetables, spring greens and different varieties of oriental eggplant (Little Fingers is unique and high yielding). Latino clientele call for a variety of peppers both mild and hot (try Holy Mole for Mole Sauce and Cheyenne for an earlier Cayenne), and don’t forget your Italian customers: lots of fresh paste tomatoes, basil, rosemary, and parsley.

Remember that it never hurts to ask the customers what they want, so a quick survey might be in order.



CUT FLOWERS AT THE MARKET...



Farmers' Market Managers should encourage their vendors to consider growing and selling fresh cut flowers at the market

this summer and fall for the following reasons:

1. Fresh cut flowers add to the ambience of local Farmers' Markets. The ability of any one market to draw more clientele is enhanced with the offering of a wide diversity of products. Bright, colorful cut flowers are perfect for such an enhancement.
2. Cut flowers at the market go hand-in-hand with the "Lifestyle" concept. Consumers are looking for the complete finished package, and cut flowers are an impulse item that they can take home, stick in a vase, and enjoy the cheerful addition they offer to any home.
3. Cut flowers are very good profit margin items, and often times one will encounter a vendor at the market that has his or her booth devoted entirely to cuts.

4. Cut flowers continue to grow in popularity and are a core product in our society today. All major holidays have cut flower offerings associated with them. Why not bring this concept into the Farmers' Markets.

5. Bright color at the market is essential and nothing does it better than cut flowers.

6. Cuts are quite easy to grow and harvest when you begin with some of the tried and true species. Sunflowers, zinnias and gladiolus are some of the most popular with consumers, and they are easy to get to market.

7. **The 2008 Harris Seeds Professional Vegetable Growers' Catalog** lists nearly 200 varieties of cut flowers for growers to consider. Ask for our free Cultural Guide that includes seed starting and growing tips for all cut flowers. See our cut flower supplies section in this catalog as well.



FARMERS' MARKET SPOTLIGHT

THE SOUTH WEDGE FARMERS' MARKET MODELS A SUCCESSFUL URBAN MARKETPLACE OF LOCAL FOODS

Urban residents increasingly confront issues associated with access to fresh and nutritious foods, connections to local agriculture, neighborhood-based social activity, localized efforts of economic development, and health status. At the same time, essential to the sustainability of small, ecologically sound farms, and the rural communities they are part of, is a viable market wherein agricultural products can receive a fair price and farmers are able to make living wages. These needs provide the context for a common solution: an effective, organized strategy to connect local, ecologically sound farms to a viable urban marketplace in a way that enhances food availability and security, public events, community

arts, social capital, and neighborhood based economic development.

In 2007, a group of community residents, local farmers, and professionals in the field of agriculture and food came together to create The South Wedge Farmers' Market (SWFM), situated in an urban neighborhood in Rochester. Through this partnership and leadership, SWFM has established itself as an extremely successful market for both farmers and community residents, and has modeled one approach to the above-mentioned strategy. This small, principled farmers' market far exceeded the expectations of the participating farmers, its customers, and the organizing group. It produced more than \$90,000 in sales for participating farms and food producers, a wonderful shopping and social experience for an average of 700 neighborhood residents on Thursday evenings

throughout the season, a venue for local businesses to connect with the community, a place for local musicians and artists to perform and display, and a genuine connection between Rochester and its surrounding rural and agricultural communities.

The SWFM is looking forward to another wonderful and exciting season in 2008. The market will operate May 1st through November, Thursday evenings 4 to 8 at the corner of S. Clinton and Alexander. Visit www.swfarmersmarket.org for more information. See you at the market!



PERHAPS WE CAN HELP...

Big box grocery stores can sell a lot of product to their customers as they all have big grocery carts that can hold hundreds of dollars of value at one time. Considering this, we have done some research and came up with a couple products that may be of benefit to your Farmers' Market. Please take a look and let us know if you are interested. You can let us know what you think by either calling Mark Greene at: 800-544-7938 (ext 7017) or send us an e-mail at: growers@harriseseeds.com



Farmers' Market Veggie Tote Bag

This heavy duty tote bag can be used at your market over and over again by your customers. Made of long lasting polypropylene, these bags can be sold to your customers, or offer them as a premium.

Box of 100 Bags...\$195.00 (\$1.95 ea.)

Box of 500 Bags...\$875.00 (\$1.75 ea.)

Freight not included

Are you interested...let us hear from you!



Farmers' Market Money Apron

Keep your cash at the market close to your belt, for easy money exchange.

Farmers' Market Money Apron...\$2.95 ea.

5 or more...\$2.75 ea. Freight not included

Are you interested...let us hear from you!



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

The annual NAFDMA (North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association) annual Convention in Wisconsin provided the optimum opportunity to network with fellow growers and Market Managers, learn more about the industry, tour facilities in the "down" season, and resource product and accessories at the 100+ vendor trade show.

Did we see you there?

Visit the website at www.nafdma.com to review the benefits of membership and familiarize yourself with the online information offerings. **NAFDMA membership is a terrific value for Farmers' Market Managers and growers!**

...we want to see you at the meeting next year in Georgia!!!



FREE CD... VEGETABLE VARIETIES FOR FARMERS' MARKETS!

The folks at Harris Seeds put together a CD on vegetable varieties for Farmer's Markets that discusses:

- Tried and true recommendations
- Emerging best sellers
- What the future will bring

If you would like a free copy for presentation to vendors at your Market, call us Toll Free 800-544-7938 or e-mail us at: growers@harriseseeds.com

HARRIS SEEDS
A grower friendly company

NEWS FROM THE VEGETABLE SEEDS DEPARTMENT

Mark Willis, Vegetable Seed Product Manager

Traditional large pumpkins can be a hardship for transporting and selling at Farmers' Markets because of their physical size. How many big pumpkins can you get in the back of a truck, and how will your customers carry them out when you sell them?

The solution to this problem is our line-up of tiny ornamental pumpkins. You can easily pack hundreds of these delightful, tiny ornamentals in the back of a pick-up and have room for lots of produce too.

Gargoyle F1 (105 days) This unique 3 to



5 lb. hard shell offers an additional feature of occasional and distinct genetic warts. The compact vines produce round

to globe-shaped fruit with good orange color. Plants have intermediate resistance to powdery mildew. 11699-00-01 250 sds. \$17.20; 1000 sds. \$55.00

Our "Ironsides" is a 2 lb. smooth, hard shell beauty that is perfect for painting, and it will last for many months on the shelf.



"Lil' Pump-Ke-Mon" is only 1 to 2 lbs. each, and they have a very unusual and attractive color pattern for impulse sales.

Our "Munchkin" is rated the best small ornamental (3 to 4" wide) in the business.



"Baby Boo" is the white version of Munchkin, and is a popular item for fall sales.

For our complete list of tiny ornamental pumpkins, refer to our **2008 Professional Vegetable Growers' Catalog** or visit our web site: www.harriseseeds.com



PROBLEM SOLVERS CORNER...



No matter where your market is located, parking is an issue that most managers continuously struggle with. Providing easy access to the market and convenient and safe parking for as many customers as possible within a tight timeframe, on one or two days of the week is truly a challenge. Congested areas, lack of legal parking, new construction, road repairs, weather and other special events in the area can only add to your aggravation.

Remember that your customers are going out of their way, at a very specific time, every time they choose to shop at your Market – don't scare them away before they arrive due to parking problems.

Every Market's parking issues and

solutions are unique, therefore here are a few possible options that we've heard about recently:

- "Bike to the Market" coupons, offering discount incentives for willing urbanites.
- Validate paid parking or buy "1 hour" parking passes from nearby lots.
- Free shuttle service from an off-site lot.
- Create a supervised "pick-up" area for customers with larger purchases.
- Check with municipal officials to determine if parking regulations can be relaxed during market times.
- Provide a traffic and parking director to organize and direct the parking pain.

10TH ANNUAL IOWA FARMERS MARKET WORKSHOP

Over 155 attended the 10th Annual Iowa Farmers Market Workshop on Saturday, February 23rd in Des Moines, Iowa. Speakers were Jane Weber, Executive Director, Mississippi Valley Growers' Association; Jerry Chizek, Calhoun County Community Foundation; Ginny Gieseke, Market Manager, Drake Neighborhood Farmers' Market; Stephen Reno, Assistant Attorney General, Iowa Attorney General's Office; and Barbara Lovitt, Marketing Specialist, Iowa Dept. of Agriculture. Topics included grant opportunities, food safety, legal issues involving vendor relations, 2008 trends, and more. The Farmers Sales Training Video to Enhance Marketing and Sales at Farmers' Market by Steve Miller, Cornell University Extension, was well received.