

## **MSU Product Center**

*For Agriculture and Natural Resources*

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### **Herbaceous perennials – Selective opportunities**

#### **Market drivers that provide selective opportunities**

- Suppliers of herbaceous perennials have selective opportunities to raise sales from these plants based on **convenience**, **value**, **ethnicity** and **demographics** as market drivers.

#### **Specific opportunities**

- Although some perennials are currently coming as container plants, there are still many plants that are coming bare root and these plants also need frequent watering, feeding, etc. So convenience, as a market driver, will play a selective role.
- Herbaceous perennials are less of a commodity than annuals. Thus they are more expensive than the annual packs. There are also certain perennial specialties that are very expensive. With the increasing demand for large containers that have high quality combinations of annuals and perennials, value will have only some role to raise gains from sales. There are also selective opportunities in the demographic and ethnic market segment. The baby boomer generation will continue embracing gardening activities that include perennials.
- Garden centers that offer different plant varieties, unique foliage and flower colors, and make different arrangements and combinations with annuals have many opportunities to increase sales. Herbaceous perennials can also benefit from a continued use of professional and DIY service providers who add these plants in their garden design and decoration elements. Home centers will be the preferred market outlets to these consumers and others who also want to buy other items like garden supplies or building materials at one stop shopping.
- Herbaceous perennial growers can benefit from florists who can come up with unique ideas and flower recipes that enhance the use of these plants in plant mixes and container combinations. Supermarkets will be selective and carry only a limited number of varieties. Sales through these market outlets can be raised, if growers are in a position to offer different combinations of annuals and perennials as container plants that are attractive for the consumer who normally wants to make one stop shopping in these markets. Mass merchandisers' focus will be on selected varieties that are available in relatively large quantities and at discount prices.

#### **New product examples**

- The U.S. National Arboretum has introduced many new ornamental and flowering trees and shrubs in recent years. The Arboretum has released over 650 different woody and herbaceous plants in the last seven decades.

#### **Special issues**

- One of the main challenges for perennials is the shorter blooming time they have compared to annuals. The consumer currently appears to be looking for more perennial varieties and selections that could bloom for a longer period.
- The other challenge is the difficulty to establish plant categories for different market segments. Garden centers have started grouping perennials by specific character traits. For example, some garden centers are selling them grouped as drought tolerant, shade lovers, fall bloomers, etc. but product differentiation in this category still requires a lot of work.

#### **Key to success**

- Product innovations on varieties, colors, foliage and flower texture, and innovations on containers that make these plants key elements in garden design and decoration concepts incorporating them with annuals, trees, shrubs and lawn use are key to success.

#### **Sources**

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<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Newintro/index.html> - *Arboretum plant introductions and releases.*