

Tyfu Cymru: Technical Advice Sheet

Growing Cut Flowers Year Round

Growing Flowers for Cutting

A huge range of plants from trees and shrubs to annuals and bulbs can be grown for flowers and this means that they can be harvested for nearly 12 months of the year, particularly if some form of protection is available such as glasshouses or tunnels. Supermarket and florists often focus on imported flowers that can withstand a long supply chain, so you can offer local specialities that your customers won't be able to find in mainstream shops.

As you plan your schedule there are various things to consider. Customer demand can show strong peaks over the season such as white chrysanthemums in the winter period and early spring, so you can use this as a guide as you get a feel for your customer's needs. This should also accommodate a good range of flower varieties, and targeting 10 or more flowers in season at a time. You should also include rotation planning, avoiding planting by family to minimise disease and weed build up and aim to plant by harvest time to improve ease of harvest. You can also include cultivation approaches to help schedule plants. Plants grown in pots or modules can be moved in/out of protection as the season requires it, helping you to extend the season where required. Chilling of bulbs or corms (e.g. Gladioli) and successive plantings can give a good spread of flowers. Cutting back perennials between May and June (the "Chelsea Chop") can be suitable for many flower types such as *Helianthus* and *Echinacea* can push back flowering, encourage side shoot development and will have a bigger effect the closer you come to flowering. For large stands this can be done in blocks to give waves of flowers over a period of time to avoid gluts.

Think carefully about what grow, and what will fit with your existing market and growing facilities. Some flowers are best left to the importers: the flower trade is now global with the "Big 6" (rose, carnation, chrysanthemum, lily, gladiolus and orchid) being imported from the EU, Africa and Central America. These can be purchased wholesale through the Dutch auction system and can be ordered for weekly deliveries to supplement whatever you can grow. It is also possible to order flowers from UK producers year-round, with suppliers such as www.flowersbyclowance.co.uk and www.evolveflowers.com able to supply flowers from Cornwall and the Scilly Isles. Generally such suppliers offer a fixed range of products at relatively stable prices and allows the small-scale producer to offer a much broader range of products. Given below are a range of typical cut flower species, with guidance on flowering times to help you plan for year-round production.

Flowers from Seed

Flowers grown from seed, especially for annuals, can be easy and cheap to grow. Most crops are short terms and can be sown several times over the season to help continuity of supply, with plantings every 3-4 weeks, including the spring and autumn periods. For best results these should be sown under good conditions such as under plastic or glass, with multiple seeds down into modules to allow the plants to grow into a ready-made bunch. Optimal temperatures will ensure good germination and give good early growth whilst helping to avoid early weed setting. As well as cut flowers, module-raised plants can be sold as an ornamental product alongside other young modules such as vegetables.



A bed of flowering Michaelmas Daisy (Aster)

Target spacing of around 30x30cm can be used as a general guide. Tall plants will need net supports in most cases, sunflowers will be self-supporting but sweet peas need a frame or canes to support. If sowing in modular trays or root trainers use a module filling compost. For most plants optimal germination is around 20°C and a small heated cabinet can come in useful as quick germination is wanted, but plants can be grown in cold tunnels if fleece is available for spring frosts in April and May.

Crop	Sowing dates	Recommended System	Harvest Period	Scale of Difficulty 1 Easy - 5 Hard
<i>Achillea</i>	Jan-Jul	BIP	June	1
<i>Antirrhinum</i>	Jan Feb	MSM	May	1
<i>Aquilegia</i>	April-Jun or Sept	MSM	April	1
<i>Aster</i> (annual)	Feb-April	MSM C	July	1
<i>Bupleurum</i>	March	MSM C	Aug	2
<i>Calendula</i>	Sep or March	MSM C	April	1
<i>Carthamus</i>	April –June	MSM	July	1
<i>Chrysanthemum</i>	March-May	BIP	Sept to Nov	3
Clary	April	MSM	June	1
Cornflower	March Onwards	MSM DD C	June	1
Cosmos	March	MSM	June	1
<i>Dahlia</i>	May	BIP	July	2
<i>Gypsophila</i>	Feb Onwards	MSM	May	1
<i>Helenium</i>	March	BIP	July	1
<i>Helichrysum</i>	March Onwards	MSM C	June	1
Larkspur	Aug/Sept or Feb	MSM C	July	3
<i>Molucella</i>	April	MSM	Aug	3
<i>Nigella</i>	Feb>	MSM C	May	1
<i>Pyrethrum</i>	May	MSM	July	2
<i>Rudbeckia</i>	March	MSM	July	1
<i>Statice</i>	Feb	MSM	July	1
Stocks (P)	Nov or May/June	PO	May	3
Sunflowers	Jan-April	SSM	July	1
Sweet Peas	Nov & March	MSM	June	2
Sweet William	July Aug	MSM	May/June	2
Wallflower	June	DD	April	2
<i>Zinnia</i>	April	MSM	Aug	3

MSM Multi-seed Modules **C** Continuity **BIP** Buy-in-Plugs **PO** Pricked-out **DD** Direct Drill

Mixed annuals (e.g. *Cosmos*, *Zinnia*, *Helenium*) can be grown under plastic protection into modular trays to extent the season with careful irrigation and nutrition management.

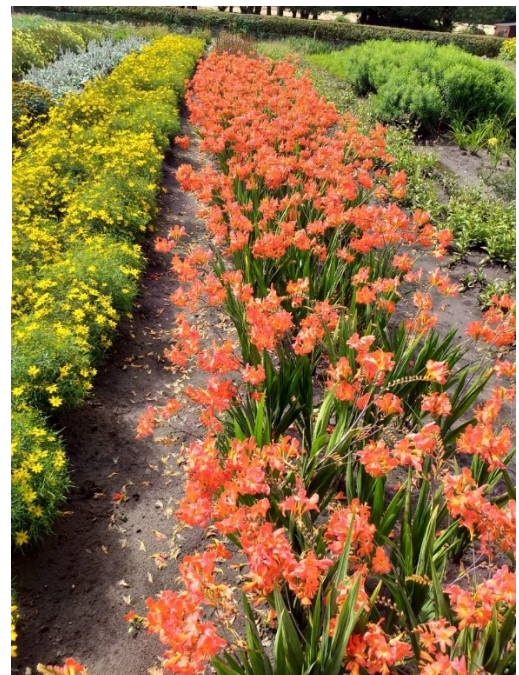


Perennial Cut Flowers

Perennials will need semi-permanent beds as they will crop for two or more years. These can be initially planted October/November or February/March. These will be self-supporting, although will require lifting and splitting periodically, especially if the flower numbers are reducing. You'll need to be careful managing weeds in established beds, but fully dormant plants (showing no green) can be oversprayed with contact herbicides to help reduce the weed burden. Spacing is more variable with perennials, taller plants like Peonies will need more space but can remain planted for years and are perhaps best treated as shrubs. Be prepared to be experiment here – there are other perennials that are not traditional cut flowers but may be attractive to your customers.

Crop	Flowering Time	Height (cm)	Longevity (yr)	Scale of Difficulty 1 Easy - 5 Hard
<i>Achillea</i>	June-Aug	90	3	1
<i>Achillea Pearl</i>	June -Aug	90	3+	1
<i>Alstromeria</i>	June Sept	90-120	3+	1
<i>Aster</i>	Aug-Oct	80-120	4+	1
<i>Campanula pers.</i>	Jun-Aug	90	3	1
<i>Chrysanthemum</i>	June Aug	30	3	1
<i>Echinacea</i>	July Aug	90	2	2
<i>Helenium</i>	June-Oct	90	2	1
<i>Helianthus</i>	Aug-Sept	150	5	1
<i>Leucanithemum</i>	June – Oct	65	5	1
<i>Paeonia</i>	May-June	90	20	3
<i>Phlox pan.</i>	July Sept	80	3	2
<i>Scabiosa</i>	June-Oct	80	2	2
<i>Solidago</i>	July Aug	65	4	1
<i>Veronica</i>	June Aug	80	4	1
Whetmans Pinks	June Oct	35	2	1

Beds of perennials such *Coreopsis* and *Crocsmia* can produce flowers over many successive seasons, and can quickly and easily be bulked up if regularly lifted and split. Very careful weed control will be necessary, however, to avoid heavy overgrowth.



Flowering Shrubs

For longer plantings shrubs can provide a wealth of flowers while foliage can be useful for making arrangements.

Crop	Flowering Time	Height (cm)	Flower or Foliage	Scale of Difficulty 1 Easy - 5 Hard
Roses	June-Oct	150	Flower	2
Lavender	June-Sept	30	Flower	1
Lilac	May	200	Flower	1
<i>Eucalyptus</i>	All year	1000	Foliage	2
<i>Osmanthus</i>	All year	200	Foliage	2
<i>Pittosporum</i>	All year	200	Foliage	3
Willow	April to Sept	300	Foliage	1
<i>Hypericum</i>	June to Oct	200	Foliage	1
<i>Photinia</i>	All year	200	Foliage	2

Flowering Bulbs and Corms

Bulbs and corms can be a very useful group as they flower outside of the usual flower seasons, and help keep a supply to your customers. Some will be perennial, while others are best treated as annuals. Lilies and gladioli can be planted in sequence too extend the cutting season. Daffodils can be marketed on the strength of their Welsh provenance, while these can be sold as flowering live products for longer term display.

Crop	Flowering Time	Height (cm)	Increasing Naturally	Scale of Difficulty 1 Easy - 5 Hard
Daffodils	Nov to May	60	Y	1
Tulips	March to May	35	N	2
<i>Allium</i>	May June	100	Y	2
<i>Anemone De Caen</i>	April May (mild areas)	25	N	3
<i>Camassia</i>	May June	120	Y	1
<i>Gladioli</i>	July Sept	100	N	1
Dutch Iris	May June	60	Y/N	1
Lily of the Valley	May	30	Y	2
Lilies	July Oct	100+	N	2
<i>Tritelia</i>	June	30	Y	1

Later Season Production

Traditional spray chrysanthemums, brought in as plug plants can be flowering into November if you plant as plugs from June through until August, although simple frost protection or fleecing might be needed into November but these are largely hardy. Plug plants can be supplied from specialist suppliers such as LRM Horticultural Services Ltd (lr-mason@msn.com). For extra choice *Zinnias*, *Antirrhinums*, *Aster*, *Bupleurum* and *Cerinth* can be easy options. If you have a tunnel that you want to use through the winter into March hyacinths could be planted in 3-5L mock terracotta pots, or medium and dwarf Narcissi such as “Jet Fire” or “February Gold”. Early Narcissi (e.g. “Paper White”) planted in mid-late September will be ready to sell at the point of flowering in mid-late November. Bulbs can be purchased in wholesale from suppliers such as J Parker Dutch Bulbs (Wholesale) Ltd (wholesale@jparkers.co.uk).