

# Greenhouse Activities Through the Year

We grow it all, right here! With a very few exceptions, whatever you may find at The Green House, is grown right here in our own greenhouses. The majority of our customers come into the greenhouse to shop for plants for patio containers, flower beds or vegetable gardens in May or June. Much time and effort goes in to providing the high quality, healthy plants you buy. Let's take a little excursion through the year to help understand what is involved. We don't just open the doors in the spring and all the beautiful plants just magically appear.

Once the spring season has started to wind down, we move on to the next thing. Here's what happens here. What seems on the surface to be a relatively simple process is actually, quite complicated. Here is an overview in broad strokes, what our year is like.

## June

Spring sales are winding down by the end of the month. Fall garden mums, scheduled in the winter are now being planted along with other fall plants like rudbeckia, asters and celosia. Seeding of spikes is done now for the following spring production.

## Containers

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most assuredly, a recipe for poor results and failure.

The last part of the mix, for success, is soil. Soil in containers must be looser than soil in the garden. Roots need air, specifically oxygen, to function properly, so a good loose soil is needed in containers for proper air space between the soil particles. Soil that holds too much water, causes roots to actually "drown" or at least limit their ability to take up nutrients. Coupled with the soil is water and fertilizer. Small containers need watering more frequently than larger containers. Since the water that a planted container needs is governed by the plants in them, location and weather conditions and the amount of water used when the watering is done, one can't water on a calendar schedule. Allowing the soil to dry down some on top is the best practice, then water sufficiently, not with just a small amount more frequently. Fertility is also very important. Since nutrients leach out with the drainage water, it is important for these nutrients to be replaced. So, good success depends on proper plant selection, proper container, correct soil, correct watering and fertilizing. These are all very doable.

Container gardening classes that we have every spring are still on schedule to be held at the greenhouse in Carlton from April 19-24. Classes are every night from 6-8 PM M-F, Thursday 10-Noon, and Saturday 9-11 and 1-3. Enrollment is limited for each class so sign up early by calling Carlton Community Ed at 218 384-4464 ext 5. Needed updates on these classes will appear in the next newsletter.

## July

Satellite greenhouses in parking lots around the area are now disassembled and stored away for the next season. We are starting to review notes from this past season to incorporate into the plan for next spring. Inventory all hard goods, containers, pots and supplies as these numbers will be needed next month.

## August

Planting of poinsettias happens this month. Major planning is happening here. Information from suppliers on new varieties is coming in and decisions need to be made, big-time. What to grow? How much? What to add to production? What can be eliminated to make room for new varieties? What to buy from whom? Then we put the orders together and submit them to suppliers. Garden mums, celosia, asters and rudbeckia are coloring and sales of these begin. Come and get 'em. Trade shows with retail and production merchandise begin. Same process! What to buy and how much and from whom? Purchasing may sound like fun (and it is), but it is hard work. Pinching of poinsettias is done late in the month,

to make them produce multiple flowers. Though not part of production, maintenance of the greenhouses and facility gets needed attention.

## September

Space the poinsettias. They are initiating flower now. Absolutely NO extra light is allowed at this time, as they flower by day length, which is getting shorter. Focus on the crop is needed. Start finishing all those little tasks needing being done.

## October

The poinsettias are starting to show color now and we see a change every day now. Starting prep some of the greenhouses that we shut down for winter, (we have 15 in Carlton, 2 in Aitkin and 2 in McGregor) by draining water from water lines and heat lines. It's the slowest month of the year.

## November

The poinsettias are really coloring now and the first ones are ready for sale by the 15th. Poinsettia shipping is in full swing right after Thanksgiving. Poinsettias come in many other colors besides

the more popular red. In the greenhouse you will also find white, pink, red with white speckles, marble (pink and white on the same bract) and burgundy. Becoming popular now are poinsettias sprayed to be blue, purple, fuchsia and salmon. There are also some other colors available that we don't do. Those "designer" colors are enough for us. Around Thanksgiving is the best time to bring in the family for a super photo op with all the poinsettias in color, and pick out your poinsettia(s) to take home at the same time. You could never get a fresher plant anywhere. We do a little seeding for spring already. We also have some great gift items for the gardener on your list, including gift certificates.

## December

Poinsettias are going out the door like crazy. Things slow to a halt by the end of the month. Schedule garden mums, etc. for June planting.

## January

We're already doing some seeding for the spring crop. By mid-month plant material begins arriving that was ordered in August. Planting season starts, but slowly. Looking to work in a greenhouse? Now is the time to apply. Green-

house work is very enjoyable, rewarding work, but it is NOT June Cleaver walking around in a sundress, spritzing and primping flowers! The work is not so much heavy lifting as it is productivity oriented.

## February

Here we go! Major plant material is coming in to plant. Seeding is in full swing by end of the month. Hanging baskets are being planted big time, the third week of the month. The operations crew is ramped up to high gear filling pots with soil and getting them to where they will be planted. Scheduling of poinsettias for August planting.

## March

Planting like crazy, non stop. Watering and fertilizing (the most critically important of all that we do in the greenhouse) is a major focal point, now that there are huge numbers of plants being planted. Major activity.

## April

The busiest month of the year. Still planting, still watering even more now that plants are bigger and more of them. Spacing out and moving of plants planted

earlier as they get bigger, needing more space. Retail setup and stocking is major focus. Patio container classes are scheduled the 19th through the 24th for '21, if COVID-19 situation permits. Satellite greenhouses are put up. Hiring of retail staff is a major focus. Could this mean you? Planting of bare root nursery stock is this month; four days of serious work. The greenhouse is absolutely beautiful and a sight to see. Come in, bring your camera.

## May

No time to rest! Opening and stocking of satellite stores begins big time. Picking orders, loading, shipping and unloading, along with the rest of the work load, is nonstop. Customer service is primary. We may consider expanding business hours in order to spread out customer traffic if the COVID is still an issue. The greenhouse will be getting to be seriously empty by the end of the month.

## June

Start the whole process all over again!

## Seed tape

We have many inquiries regarding "seed tape," or a biodegradable paper tape having seeds secured on them, whereby the gardener just makes a furrow in the garden, lays the unrolled tape out in the furrow and covers it with soil. For those who have a tendency to sow too heavily, this is a great alternative as the seeds are spaced out at the optimum spacing, which is the up-side. However, there are downsides to this practice — cost and varietal selection. In general, a 15' row would cost about \$5. The biggest issue is selection. Most all seed companies that offer this product may only offer one or two varieties of a plant. We offer Scarlet Nantes Carrots, Salad Bowl Lettuce and Sparkler Radishes. For other varieties, here's how to DO IT YOURSELF: The materials you will need are: toilet paper, paste made up of flour and water, tape measure and an artist paint brush and your seed. Most seed used for this are carrots, radishes, lettuce and beets, the smaller seeded vegetables, but even flowers like zinnias can be grown by this method. Select your seed spacing from the recommendation on the seed packet. Cut a convenient length of toilet paper of about 4' in half, lengthwise, leaving a strip about 2" wide. Mix the paste so that it is easily worked with to about paint consistency. Dip the brush in the paste, use that to pick up a seed, then paint the seed onto the paper about 3/4" in from the edge. When done fold the paper over, resulting in a strip about 1" wide. Allow to dry and then roll it up until spring planting.

This might be just the craft project that you need to help get through those short winter days or long winter evenings, or to get you started with spring gardening. If you want to give this a try, we recommend carrots, radishes, lettuce, beets, swiss chard, spinach or turnips, things with smaller seed that are easily oversown.

## Newsletter

The Green House News has been printed and mailed for over 25 years. Customer appreciation for this publication has been expressed every year. About 15 years ago we missed a printing and the customer disappointment was so noted that we never did it again. However, due to mailing and printing costs, this issue is going to be the last printed issue of The Green House News. It will still be written and available electronically. Essentially everyone is on the internet and has e-mail today. If you want to continue to receive this publication, as almost everyone has expressed that they do, you can get it in two different ways. E-mail your desire to receive it by e-mail, by e-mailing your request to [thegreenhouse210@hotmail.com](mailto:thegreenhouse210@hotmail.com), and you will receive it that way. You will then be able to be informed of special sales or promotions we have, the same way. You also will be able to read it on our website at [thegreenhousecarlton.com](http://thegreenhousecarlton.com). Either way you will be able to print it and have it in paper form, if you wish. What's new for '21 will be found there.

## My Poinsettia



The beautiful poinsettia that you bought or were given this past November or December is still doing well, hopefully. Now that spring is on us, what do you do with it? You may be tired of it or you may want the location where you have it for something else. They can be grown outside even in MN or WI, once the weather warms up. The flowers and bracts (colored leaves) are probably looking pretty spent by now. Cutting them off completely when putting them outside will allow new branches to grow and make for a very nice green plant outside. But how can you get it to re-bloom?

Poinsettias grow naturally in places like Texas, California, Mexico and where there is similar climate. They flower naturally at the end of the calendar year because they initiate flower when the days become shorter. Clearly they can't grow outside here in October, November or December, so they must be inside. Here's all you need to do. Provide 13-13½ hours of uninterrupted darkness every night for about 6 weeks starting in early September, provide sufficient light during daytime hours and slightly fluctuating temperatures around 68 degrees and proper nutrition. "I can't provide all those things" you say. You're right, it would be unrealistic to attempt. If you have grown your plant outside like mentioned, put it in the compost with the rest of your annuals at the end of the season and get yourself a new one, a perfect one, from The Green House this coming season.