

Stock (*Matthiola incana*) as a locally produced cut flower for Northern Ireland

Summary technical note, 2009

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Introduction: Cut Flower Stock (*Matthiola incana*) is a popular cut flower within the UK and Ireland and is known for its beautiful, strongly scented column shaped flowers traditionally seasonally available in May and June each year. CAFRE, Greenmount Campus have successfully demonstrated and transferred the technology of extending the seasonable availability of Stock from May to October to local growers due to the mild summer climate in Northern Ireland.

Technology project findings: CAFRE, Greenmount Campus trialled and demonstrated the production of cut flower Stock between 2000 and 2005 both in a glasshouse and in a polytunnel with side ventilation. Good quality marketable stems were produced between early May and late June under glass and between late May and early October under tunnels. The results of the project have proven that the cool summer conditions in Northern Ireland allow a natural season extension over competitors in England and the Netherlands.

Technology grower adoption: Several new growers have started to grow small scale production of Stock for marketing to local florists and shops with good success and one grower specialises in the large scale production of Stock for a major retail multiple.

Obtaining planting material: Young plants of Stock are available as module plants of which can be purchased from specialist Dutch young plant raisers through the local representative Shane Donnelly of Donnelly Horticulture, Greenisland Flowers. Contact Shane Donnelly for availability, price list and delivery dates. (www.donnellyhorticulture.com/greenisland.htm)

Planting density: Plant Stock plants into soil at 64 to 80 plants per m².

Expected Yield: Stock should produce 60 to 80 stems per m².

Harvest period: Early May to June for glasshouse production and late May to September for tunnel production.

Vase life: anticipated vase life of 7 to 10 days.

Weeds, Pests and Diseases: Weeds should be controlled using chemical or stem sterilisation prior to planting. Downy Mildew and Botrytis should be controlled using good crop hygiene, ventilation and air circulation fans, and a preventative fungicide spray programme.

Facilities and equipment required: Stock can be grown in a side ventilated polytunnel or a glasshouse. Use overhead irrigation to water and establish the crop, ground level trickle-tape irrigation for watering the crop after the first 2 to 3 weeks of the cropping schedule. Use 1 layer of wire support to keep stems straight under glasshouse conditions (no support wire required under tunnels, circulation fans, cold store for post harvest storage.

Marketing opportunities: local wholesalers, retail florists, local shops and farmers and town markets and retail multiples.

Advantages of selling locally produced Stock over imported stems: Stronger more robust stems and flowers, extra freshness, longer vase life, more fragrant flowers, can mix colours to suit local clients specific requirements, can adjust picking stage to suit specific customer requirements.

Interested to know more about cut flower Stock production?

If you would like to find out more about growing cut flower Stock please contact David Davidson, Ornamentals Development Adviser, CAFRE, Greenmount Campus on **email** david.davidson@dardni.gov.uk ; **tel: 028 37 515605**.