

"Lily Bulb Business Is Controlled By Three Leading and 35 Smaller Buyers," Claims Pioneer Lily Bulb Grower

Mrs. Stafford Claims Growers and Buyers Must Work Together, Each for the Interest of the Other, That The Industry Will Progress

Mrs. May Stafford, pioneer grower of lilies in this district, who recently made an extensive trip through the east to study markets, asked the Pilot to publish findings she made on this trip. The following paragraphs tell a story and urge unity in the industry:

The Croft lily business is controlled by three leading dealers and about 35 smaller dealers. These very capable dealers went to a lot of expense and effort to introduce the Croft lily into the market. They deserve a lot of credit and respect. It is no easy task to get a new plant recognized to such an extent that it becomes of commercial value.

I find there is a limited demand for Croft lilies, and that we have come up against the stone wall of feared over-production. We have a lot to learn about Croft lily market, and about the Croft lily itself before we can go ahead.

We must stop and consider the market well before we plan this fall if we want this interesting young industry to survive. The United States used to use 26,000,000 to 36,000,000 lily bulbs

each year, but only about 10% of those lilies were used as Easter lily plants. The other 90% were put into cold storage to be brought out at other times of the year as needed for growing a continuous supply of blooms for floral work. Thus far Croft lily has not taken cold storage right. The United States Department of Agriculture at Beltsville Experiment station, and others are working to find what temperatures it will take.

Besides the cold storage problems, there are several other factors that build up the present Croft lily predicament. Last year we had a very dry season. Many greenhouse growers have not as yet learned how to force Croft lilies. Some inexperienced field growers put many undersized

bulbs and mixed varieties upon the market.

The total result was that unevenness in forcing, lack of bud count, and the high prices gave dissatisfaction among forcers. The Croft lily has had an awful jolt. But there are hopes, if we will all without exception do our parts.

Croft lily plants do produce the right number of blooms, it is most wanted potted Easter plant ever known. Our present problem is to produce bulbs that will produce blooms.

In the past the crying demand has taken our six-inch bulbs and has weakened our stock. We may have to grow bulbs three years for a while. Forcers are loathe to gamble on Croft lilies this year because the sevens and eights failed them last year. Hence, one reason for the balk in buying this year. Sizes nines and tens are in as great a demand as ever, and there is no objection to a reasonable price. There were plenty of buds on that size last year.

Now, our capable buyers must resort to new methods for getting Croft lily bulbs introduced in to the market better. That costs money and takes time and effort. Those growers who planted their sixes back last year are wise. You shall not have to suffer this year. The buyers do not object to a reasonable price for nines and tens. But they must have one price set by us, and we must hold to it. The Co-op price—to dealers in 500 case lots is the price, as I'll explain later. Growers must be fair with one another and with the dealers.

Buyers say they can not go ahead and confirm orders as usual until there is positive evidence there is not over production, and that we are sticking together on prices. They prefer to have us set our own prices. But if we don't do it and stick to it, they are forced to accept the price that will automatically set itself when growers get through undercutting one another. The lowest cut is always the price sellers have to compete with.

A study of our price list at this time becomes necessary in order to understand why buyers can't go ahead. Very few understood the Co-op price list. This misunderstanding has done all the local growers damage. The co-op is the only group that has a legal right to set prices. As soon as the delegates came home from the Coos Bay meeting, where prices were set, a report was given to the Pilot for publication, but this was not the official report. This official report was published later in the Crescent City papers. It contained no greenhouse price. No selling concern, dealing with jobbers in the flower business would be so short-sighted as to set the prices for jobbers to sell at. This is an exact copy of the official report. I have one before me. (West Coast Bulb Growers, Box 84, Crescent City.)

Size 7 to 8, 250 in case (to the trade in less than 100-case lots—\$135.00; \$110.00 in lots of 100 to 500 cases, and over 500 cases, \$100.00.

The same price holds for the sizes up to 10, the only difference being in the number of bulbs per case—200 for 8s and 150 for 9s.

For 10s and up, 100 to case, \$110 to trade, \$90 in lots of 100 to 500 cases and \$82. for lots over 500 cases.

Interpreted into language we are accustomed to, this is the story:

from 250 bulbs to 25,000; Sevens, 54c each; 8s, 67½c; 9s, 90c; and 10s, \$1.00.

In lots of 25,000 to 125,000 bulbs the prices are: 7s, 44c; 8s, 55c; 9s, 73.3c; 10s, 90c.

In lots of 125,000 or more: 7s, 40c; 8s, 50c; 9s 66.6c; 10s 82c.

Since most growers have less than 25,000 bulbs, they must sell

their bulbs as: 7s, 54c; 8s, 67½c; 9s, 90c; 10s, \$1.10. Those who have over 25,000 must sell: 7s, 44c; 8s, 55; 9s, 73.3c; 10s, 90c. A grower who has over 125,000 bulbs to sell to one buyer must sell: 7s, 40c; 8s 50c; 9s, 66.6c; 10s 82c.

Now when you put yourself in a buyer's place and choose which grower you will buy from, of course you will buy from the grower who is tied down to sell the 7s for 40c; 8s for 50c; 9s for 66.6c; and 10s for 82c.

I objected to one dealer that few growers have 125,000 bulbs to

sell on one buyer. He expected that the buyers would be that the buyers will have to with the present set-up could be possible for us to assurance to buyers that the not over production this the price we are bound to is: 7s, 40c; 8s, 50c; 9s, 66.6c; 10s, 82c. This explains why must get into a group or you sell unless you are an established grower.

I found our established very able, but fair and
Concluded on Page Six

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