

2002 Home Demonstration Gardens

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Introduction

Every year extension specialists and farm superintendents invite the public to field days to share the knowledge they have gained in growing a wide variety of annual plants. In 2002, eight research farms participated in growing annual flowers and vegetables for display to the gardening public. Themes for the 2002 Home Demonstration Garden included:

1. **Grape Tomatoes** – Grape tomatoes are currently one of the most popular types of tomatoes sold. Six varieties of grape tomatoes were grown at each farm. Those varieties were; ‘Grapette,’ ‘Sweet Olive,’ ‘Gabrielle,’ ‘Summer Sweet,’ ‘Mini Charm,’ and ‘Green Grape.’
2. **Miniature vegetables** – Small fruit size is a useful novelty for some gardens. Small or miniature fruit or vegetables such as baby watermelons can be less wasteful for smaller families. Other miniature vegetables such as baby carrots are popular with families of all sizes. Miniature versions of eggplant (‘Baby Doll’), corn (‘Bonus’ and ‘Tom Thumb’), beets (‘Centurion’ and ‘Kestrel’), carrots (‘Thumbelina,’ ‘Little Finger,’ ‘Minicor,’ and ‘Parmex’), pumpkins (‘Wee Be Little’ and ‘Baby Boo’), melons (‘Yellow Doll,’ ‘Garden Baby,’ ‘Black Tail Mountain,’ and ‘Cream of Saskatchewan’), peppers (‘Mini Yellow,’ ‘Mini Chocolate,’ and ‘Jingle Bells’), and cucumbers (‘Miniature White’) were grown at each farm.
3. **Pole Beans** – Growing or training vegetables to grow vertically is not only an efficient use of space but also an attractive alternative to the typical vegetable garden. Nine heirloom and new types of pole beans were grown at each farm. Types included; Scarlet runner bean, Hyacinth bean, ‘Fortex’ French bean, ‘Willow Leaf’ lima bean, and ‘Purple Podded,’ ‘Cherokee Trail of Tears,’ ‘Lanfrauen,’ ‘Helda,’ and ‘Marvel of Venice’ pole beans.
4. **Zinnias** – The diversity of flower colors, sizes, and shapes of zinnias is amazing. Eleven hybrids and varieties were grown for their diversity in flowers and their disease resistance. ‘Envy,’ ‘Ruffles,’ ‘Giant Cactus,’ ‘Sun Gold,’ ‘Whirligig,’ and ‘Candy Stripe’ were the large flowering types grown. ‘Small World Pink,’ ‘Peter Pan,’ ‘Starbright,’ ‘Profusion Mix,’ and ‘Persian Carpet’ were the small-flowering types that were grown.
5. **Tropicals** – The bold colors and textures of tropical plants are gaining in popularity in gardens around the country. Tropical-looking plants like canna, calla lily, castor bean, datura, hibiscus, 4 o’clocks, and cuphea were grown.
6. **Corn gluten meal** – Corn gluten meal, a corn byproduct, can be an effective herbicide and fertilizer in lawns. This year the farms tested corn gluten for weed control on several small plots containing eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. Three application rates of corn gluten meal were applied at the time of transplanting.

Materials and Methods

Plants were grown in the ISU Horticulture greenhouses in Ames and transported to research farms for transplanting in mid-May. Plants were watered as needed throughout the growing season. Limited fertilizer and pesticides were used.

Survey data were collected from attendees to six of the eight field days across the state. Attendees were asked nine closed-ended questions and two open-ended questions at the completion of each field day. Approximately 500 people attended the 2002 Home Demonstration Garden field days. One hundred

ninety people completed surveys (approximately 38% response rate).

Attendee Survey Results

Demographics. The majority of surveys were answered by women (55%). Twenty-four percent of respondents were between the ages of 41–55, 46% were 55–70, and 23% were over 70 years of age. Less than 6% of the respondents were 40 years of age or younger.

Twenty-seven percent of participants traveled 5–15 miles to attend a field day, 22% traveled 16–25 miles, and 29% traveled 26–50 miles. Interestingly, 13% of the participants traveled over 50 miles to attend a field day. Only a small number (7%) lived within 5 miles of research farms. An almost equal number of participants had attended a field day in the past (51%)

compared with those who were attending for the first time (47%).

Gardening. When asked how much money they spent for flowers, vegetables, and lawns during the past year (Table 1), the highest percentage of attendees in each group spent \$11–50 on each category. When asked to predict spending for next year's garden, most expected to spend the same in 2003 (66%). Only 4% expected to spend less, and 24% expected to spend more.

The vast majority of respondents (77%) indicated that they would try one or more of the varieties grown at the Home Demonstration Garden in their garden next year. Twenty-one percent were unsure and only 1% of respondents indicated they would not try any of the varieties grown.

Table 1. Percentages of responses to annual spending on plants in their gardens.

Dollars	Flowers	Vegetables	Lawns
Less than 10	7	15	27
11–50	33	52	29
51–100	32	17	18
101–300	17	5	6
No response	4	1	4