

FLOWERS

FOR EVERYDAY HOME DECORATION

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I. PURCHASES AND USE OF FLOWERS FROM SUPERMARKET DISPLAYS

In order to learn something about the purchases and use made of flowers and potted plants purchased in four Columbus, Ohio supermarkets through an Ohio Agricultural Experiment Station project, 89 purchasers were interviewed by phone. These purchasers had volunteered to give such information by returning cards enclosed with each unit of flowers in March 1956.

Of the 89 families represented by these purchases:

- 9 had less than \$5,000 income
- 48 had between \$5,000 and \$8,000 income
- 30 had over \$8,000 income
- 2 gave no report on their income

This income distribution includes a higher percent in the upper two groups than would be found in a city as a whole. Two of the stores through which the flowers and plants are offered are located in high income areas and two in middle income areas. All four supermarkets are in shopping centers.

During March of 1956 when the cards were placed with each unit offered, most of the offerings consisted of pot mums, cyclamen, azaleas, coleus, carnations, roses and cut mums. Geraniums were not in the offerings that month and the use made of them will be determined later if such information seems desirable.

The 89 purchasers interviewed had purchased 101 units of flowers and potted plants on the day they made the purchase in which the cards were enclosed. This is an average of 1.14 units per purchase (Table 1).

TABLE 1.—Number of Purchasers Making Specified Purchases

	One Unit	Two Units	Three Units	Five Units	One of Each*
Pot Mums	22	2	1		
Cyclamen	27			1	
Azaleas	3				
Coleus	11				
Carnations	7				
Sweetheart Roses	6				
Cut Mums	5				
Pot Mums and Cyclamen					2
Azalea and Pot Mums					1
Sweetheart Roses and Pot Mums					1

*The fact that four purchasers purchased two kinds of flowers makes the entries in totals 2 and 5 add to 93.

It has been assumed that when flowers were purchased for home use that the longer the flowers or plants remained useful, the more desirable they would be to the housewife. Very few complaints were made concerning keeping qualities of any of the purchases. (Note that most of the flowers and plants lasted for more than a week in the home). A wide spread was found in the length of time the flowers and plants lasted in the home (Table 2).

TABLE 2.—Length of Time Flowers or Plants Lasted in the Home

	3 days or less	4 to 6 days	1 to 2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	Over 4 weeks
Sweetheart Roses	2	3	2	--	--	--
Carnations	1	2	3	--	1	--
Cut Mums	--	-	5	--	--	--
Pot Mums	--	--	14	4	5	5
Azaleas	--	--	2	2	--	--
Cyclamen	2	1	9	2	6	10
Coleus	--	--	--	--	--	11

It should be kept in mind that this survey was made in March and this has some effect on use made of some of the plants purchased. Of the 89 purchased:

- 58 were for everyday home decoration
- 11 were for party or entertaining decoration
- 15 were for gifts
- 3 were for outside planting
- 2 were for other purposes

Each housewife interviewed was asked how often she purchased flowers from the display at the supermarket and from floral shops.

TABLE 3.—Frequency of Purchases from Two Sources

Frequency of Purchase	Number Reporting Purchases From		
	Supermarket	Florist Shop for	
		Home	Gift
First purchase made	22	--	--
One time per year	2	13	14
Two times per year	5	17	23
Four times per year	12	12	11
Six times per year	3	4	8
8-10 times per year	4	3	7
12 times per year	10	6	6
Every 3 weeks	3	--	--
Every 2 weeks	7	--	--
Weekly	16	--	--
Received as gift	5	--	--
Never	--	34	20

From reported frequency of purchases and average number of units per purchase it was possible to calculate the approximate average of 17 units per purchaser per year from the supermarket displays. This same group of housewives made an average of 5½ purchases per year from flower shops of which 60 percent were for gifts.

Fifty-six percent of the purchases at supermarkets were not planned before the flowers were seen in the store. Of the 22 who said this was their first purchase, only one had planned to make the purchase before going to the store. Practically all of those who purchased each week had planned to make such a purchase before going to the store.

Although the sample of families with incomes under \$5,000 was small it is evident that this group contained few of the frequent purchasers of flowers. Very little difference was noted between the two higher income groups in this respect.

TABLE 4.—Frequency of Purchase by Income of Family

Purchases	Income			
	Under \$5000	\$5000-\$8000	Over \$8000	Not known
First purchase	3	14	4	--
1 or 2 per year	2	4	2	--
3, 4, or 5 per year	1	5	4	1
6 to 10 per year	2	1	5	--
Monthly	--	7	4	--
Every 2 or 3 weeks	--	5	3	--
Weekly	--	9	7	1
Received as gift	1	3	1	--

Although the sample was too small to yield completely reliable comparisons between income groups there were two differences which should be pointed out. Pot mums made up a higher percentage of purchases in the lower income groups than in the higher, while cut flower purchases seemed to be positively associated with income.

TABLE 5.—Number and Kind of Flowers or Plants Purchased by Income of Family

	Income			
	Under \$5000	\$5000-\$8000	Over \$8000	Not known
Pot Mums	4	16	7	2
Cyclamen	4	19	7	--
Coleus	1	5	5	--
Azaleas	--	2	1	1
Cut Mums	--	2	3	--
Carnations	--	4	3	--
Roses	1	1	5	--

Instructions for the care of the flowers and plants were enclosed in all units bagged. Of the 89 family representatives interviewed, 62 said the instructions were sufficient while 23 thought more detailed instructions would be desirable. Eight said they needed better instructions on the care of cyclamen and 8 would like to have each pot mum designated

as indoor or outdoor mum. (Instruction sheets designated the outdoor varieties as such but indoor varieties were not labeled as such). Four wanted to know how to care for plants after blooming (actually all plants adapted to outdoor use had such instructions).

Information on care in the home was purposely kept as brief and simple as possible. Further thought should be given to improving the information on the instruction slip with each unit offered.

II. CONSUMER PREFERENCE FOR SWEETHEART ROSES AND CHRYSANTHEMUMS

As a result of a test of preferences for cut roses, carnations, and chrysanthemums made in 1955 and reported in Research Circular 31¹, it was felt that a further test of preferences should be made. The apparent advantage of sweetheart roses over hybrid tea roses for home use made it desirable to test them against chrysanthemums which had led the preferences in the previous test.

The test was made in Columbus, Ohio early in November, 1956 with flowers furnished by growers interested in the relative consumer appeal of different sweetheart roses and chrysanthemums.

Three areas of Columbus were chosen for the test— all with family incomes above average for the city. These three areas were each in close proximity to supermarkets where flowers were offered for sale through the flower marketing project.

Four varieties of sweetheart roses were used in the test—Demure, Jingle, Fashionette and Garnette. The roses were put into cellophane bags with approximately 12 buds per package, and yellow and white chrysanthemums were placed in the same size bag to be given to housewives in the test.

All four varieties of roses were shown to the housewife who was then asked which one appealed to her most. In answer to this question:

111 said they preferred the Fashionette
49 said they preferred the Garnette
10 said they preferred the Demure
8 said they preferred the Jingle

The Fashionette rose was almost fully open while the other three were still in bud. The bigger show made by the Fashionette may have been responsible for part of preference responses for it.

¹O.A.E.S. Research Circular 31, March 1956, "Consumer Preferences for Cut Roses, Carnations, Chrysanthemums."

A preselected package of roses and a package of the chrysanthemums were given to each housewife for use in the home. The questionnaire was then given her with instructions of how and when to fill out and return.

A total of 180 housewives were given both roses and chrysanthemums, and 163 of these returned the questionnaires.

Analysis of information obtained revealed that before using the two bouquets in the home, 69 percent of the housewives said they preferred the roses given them and 31 percent said they preferred the chrysanthemums. After the flowers had been in the home seven days:

- 34 percent said they preferred roses
- 63 percent said they preferred chrysanthemums
- 3 percent said they had no preference

Preferences as stated on the questionnaires were then examined to see how many had changed their original preferences declaration after using the flowers seven days in the home. Results were as follows:

- 46 who preferred roses when first given them also preferred them after seven days' use.
- 64 who preferred roses when first given them preferred chrysanthemums after seven days' use.
- 38 who preferred chrysanthemums when first receiving them also preferred them after seven days' use.
- 9 who preferred chrysanthemums when first receiving them preferred roses after seven days' use.
- 6 made no commitment after 7 days' use.

Of the 64 who changed preferences from roses to chrysanthemums:

- 17 had received Jingle
- 15 had received Garnette
- 8 had received Fashionette
- 6 had received Demure

Of the 9 who changed preference from chrysanthemums to roses:

- 3 had received Jingle
- 3 had received Garnette
- 3 had received Demure

In the test of preferences made in the earlier study, it was shown that cut mums were generally more satisfactory to the housewife than were hybrid tea roses or carnations because of their lasting qualities. It was felt that perhaps sweetheart roses might show up better than hybrid tea roses in comparison to mums. This proved true in a very limited way. While no one changed their preference from mums to roses in the earlier test, nine changed their preference from mums to roses in the last test when matched against sweetheart roses. However, since carnations were included in the first test and not in the last, the results are not directly comparable.