
Question and Answer Period: Concurrent Session II — Specialty Crops

Elizabeth Davison: Do you need to control the greenhouse environment to grow the carnivorous plants?

Jim Booman: I use a fog system to increase the relative humidity and help reduce the temperature.

Dick Criley: What kinds of problems are you experiencing with tissue cultured plants?

Jim Rietkerk: When we experience problems of any kind with plants we purchase we simply stop doing business with whoever provided problem plants.

New Trends in Natural Ventilation

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There is no question that natural ventilation is the current "buzz word" of the day. If you had the privilege of attending this years Ohio Floral Industry trade show you would have witnessed more versions of "natural ventilation" than you may have known existed. While the issue of natural ventilation may seem new to some, it has, in fact, been a standard within our industry almost from the beginning.

In order to gain a proper perspective as to where the trends are going it is sometimes helpful to see where we've been. For the purposes of this discussion, we should start at the beginning of our industry. Please remember that the first greenhouse businesses were inherently smaller "Mom and Pop" operations. Smaller operations were the norm of the day primarily due to the more regionally based sales area and the demand for plant products. These greenhouses typically were much smaller in size than what we see today and, therefore, much easier to manage. These early structures typically incorporated small ridge vents as the primary means of ventilation. The ridge vents were opened and closed with a manual chain and pulley system.

As advances in transportation expanded the grower's sales area and the general public took more of an interest in plant products, the standard grocers found themselves requiring ever-increasing space in order to keep up with the demand for plant material. Unfortunately, the standard style of ventilation was not able to maintain the same environmental control due not only to the inadequate sizing of the vents, but also to ever increasing demands on the grower. Since there was no reliable thermostatically controlled motor available to open or close the vents, the grower found it almost impossible to manage the vent position as required.

It was during this period that mechanical ventilation found its way into the greenhouse industry. Compared to the alternative, mechanical ventilation was a Godsend in that it allowed the grower to introduce an adequate supply of fresh air to the plants on demand.