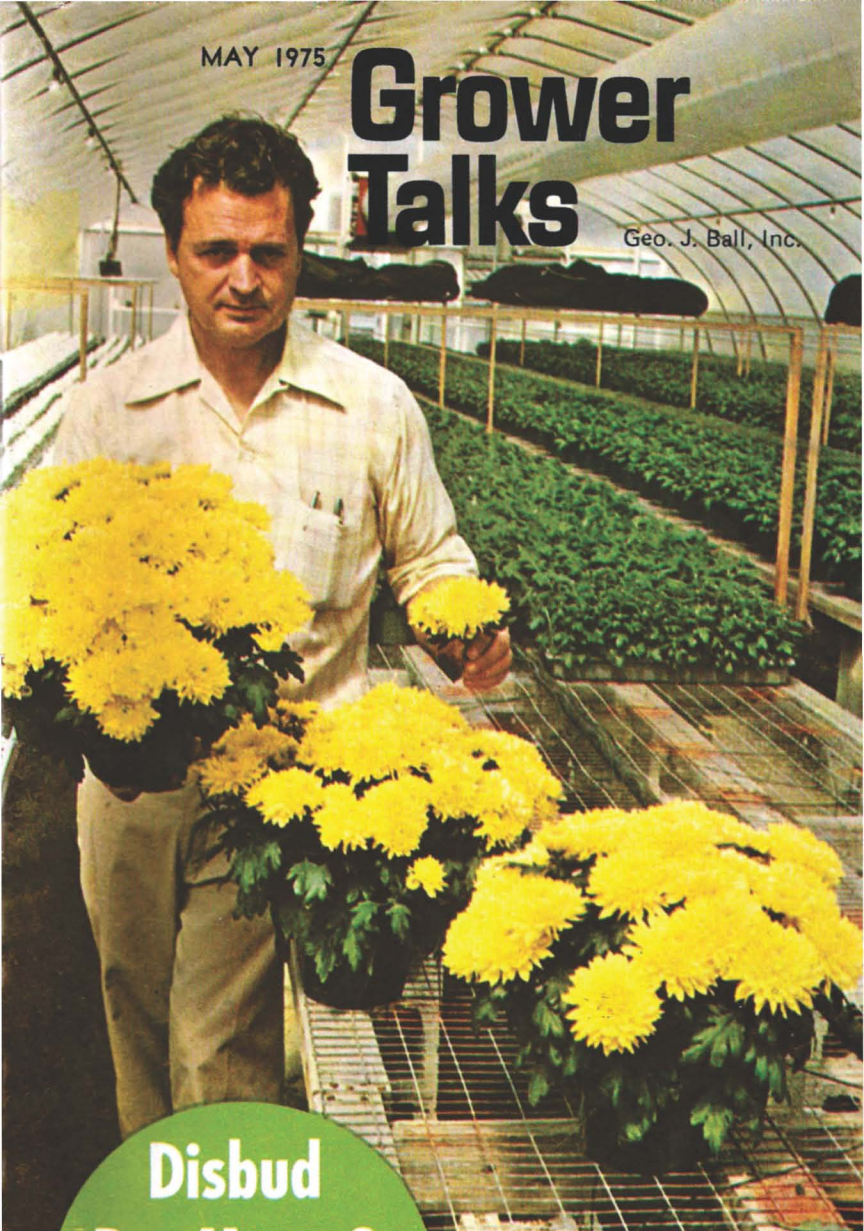


MAY 1975

# Grower Talks

Geo. J. Ball, Inc.



## Disbud Pot Mums?

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# Changes Brewing At Norm White's, Norfolk

By Vic Ball

During a call on Norm White, Norfolk, Virginia, last April (spring '74), we got onto the pot-mum disbudding controversy. Norm had grown a few *Yellow Mandalay*, each of three ways (See front cover):

- a. Normally disbudded.
- b. Let everything come.
- c. Center-bud removal only.

They were in full flower the day we called. Result: Striking! The center-bud removal plants simply made more show, of course had more flowers. Norm was looking seriously at the idea of doing center-bud removal on his entire Easter/Mother's Day pot mums, spring, '75.

We followed this up with a phone call mid-March ('75). What happened?

Interesting! First Norm had *not* gone to center-bud removal on his '75 spring holiday pot mums. Real reason was space. To do center-bud removal would take another week of time. This would throw off his basic year-round pot-mum schedule. Also, says Norm, "It would just take more space away from my bedding production which is, of course, at full peak in March and April. Take tomatoes, for example. I get four crops each spring of F<sub>1</sub> tomatoes on a bench (AC-6/8 or AC-4/8 Cell-Pak). I just figured that this fast turnover is too important at \$5.00 a flat to even let one week go by to avoid disbudding my pot mums."

For much the same reason, Norm does not boost his pot-mum production that much for Easter and Mother's Day holidays. "Even last spring," said Norm, "I could have sold another 2,500 for Easter, 3,500 for Mother's Day—in addition to my normal 1,000 a week year-round."

Makes more of a case for such growers getting a substantial premium price for their holiday pot-mum crop—which GROWER TALKS has been advocating for some time (see Editorial, April, 75).



Here's a lovely bed of Yellow Mandalay at Norm White's, April of 1974.

But Norm is also seriously considering expanding his greenhouse area for spring '76. That done, he *would* go into center-bud removal on the spring holiday pot mums. "After all, they are, as I see it, a much prettier plant than the disbudded ones. And disbudding is costing me not far below 20-25¢ a plant (that was spring '74)."

More details on center-bud removal of *Mandalays*: Norm figures 8.5 weeks, short days to flower, on spring *Mandalays* disbudded. With center-bud removal, he allows 9.5 weeks. All this at 62° nights most of the way. In some cases, he goes down to 60° towards the end of the crop.

Caution! If you do go to center-bud removal or just "let all buds come," be sure to advance potting and short day dates by one week—start the whole crop a week earlier. Or you won't get there on time.



## Smaller "6-Inch Pot Mums"

Speaking of pot mums, Norm is also probing the idea of diverting some of his 6-inch pot-mum crop to 5½-inch pots, 3 cuttings. Besides lower cutting costs, this plan requires substantially less space. These are not Norm's figures, but for example: going from a 14 by 14-inch to a 12 by 12-inch means 25% more pots per bench. That's 25% less overhead, including fuel costs. Norm is thinking of this 5½-inch plant, mainly, for his florist trade. "It would put the pot mum down in retail price to a point where more people would buy mums." Sort of an inflation fighter.

He's already grown a few 5½-inch plants.

How about a 4-inch? Norm is trying a few of them, too, mainly for his chain trade.

Pot mums here this spring, 6½-inch at \$3.20 versus \$3.00, spring '74.

## How's Bedding?

We had to ask. Norm White is a large specialist producer in this area.

He was optimistic on this outlook for the spring. "Excellent," was the word. He's going from \$4.72, spring '74 to \$5.00 a flat *wholesale*—for mainly Cell-Pak AC-6/8 plants. That's 48 "Cells" per 11 by 22-inch flat and the \$5.00 is net to Norm.

That's double the wholesale price in some areas in the U.S.! And for the same size flat—actually, Norm's flat has about a third fewer plants than most other areas and, of course, better quality, individual plants.

Norm's comment on the price increase: "We got no real complaints. Everyone pretty well expected this much of an increase."

Vegetables: "They'll be a strong part of it again this spring. They were nearly half of the flats we sold spring '74; they'll be over half spring '75. People are wanting a wide variety of vegetable plants. Tomatoes clearly #1, peppers #2, but we offer many other things."

P.S. A few weeks ago we had a visit by Dieter Tetzlaff of Brandkamp, German mum propagator. Comment on disbudding pot mums: "Almost no one here in Germany disbuds pot mums anymore—no one has for years, and they're a big crop here, too. Nearly all 12-centimeter (4½-inch) pots. The British generally do disbud."