

## CHAT ROOM

We continue to take pride in our ability to provide technical support services, and to innovate in their delivery.

The use of Fastfax and internet posted information ([www.ecke.com](http://www.ecke.com)) together with the Ecke Fresh newsletter have been important parts of this system. They provide in depth discussion of focused issues affecting all growers.

With the proliferation of new products in The Flower Fields collection, and the variety of issues confronting growers we have initiated the next step in quality customer support. We have broadened the technical support available through the focused use of email communication.

Technical support will now be available from the Ecke Ranch exclusively by email ([www.ecke.com/techhelp](mailto:www.ecke.com/techhelp)) with the same 24 hour commitment as in the past, but with more resources to meet your needs.

Email gives us better tools to address your concerns.

- We can have a dialogue, without simultaneity of customer and professional.
- Charts, digital photos, and other material can easily be attached and available to our professionals as they consider your issue.
- We can match the question with the professional best able to respond.
- A written record, both of your question, and our suggestion, gives you a library to which you can refer and avoids the confusion that often accompanies voice communication.
- We can bring multiple resources – from grower to pathologist – rapidly into the dialogue.

Using our system is easy. Just start at our web entry ([www.ecke.com/techhelp](http://www.ecke.com/techhelp)). Once your base data (your name, email address, and location) are entered, each time you go back, our portal will automatically enter that data – so only your new questions will be required.

Please give it a try – and help us to serve you better.

**Chris Calkins**  
President  
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## Contact Us:

If you would like to contact us with feedback or if you need technical assistance please log on to [www.ecke.com/techhelp](http://www.ecke.com/techhelp)

## Theme Up! It's A Retail Trend

A lot of attention is focused these days on combination planting, be it in pots, baskets or other contained garden settings. The annuals and perennials that make up The



Flower Fields® program all fit this need wonderfully, providing growers with ample opportunities to supply retailers with high performance garden plants that are sure to sell! But through all this, let us not ignore or forget these plants are also ideally suited as bedding plants for use in the traditional garden, be it a majestic park or the humble "house next door". To really help retailers go to the next level, growers should offer a selection of plants with themes and sales messages. Whether it is an "early spring garden", a "fragrance garden", or an "annual border", progressive retailers will appreciate your support in both ideas and point of purchase (POP) materials available from The Flower Fields.

Early spring gardens are made up of a collection of plants that can be grown cold and therefore, sold before traditional spring "Mother's Day" sales, extending the window of opportunity for you and the retailer. Use annuals that will bring lots of big, bold color for early in the season, like *Osteospermum*. The color range and flower forms available make these plants the centerpiece of an early spring collection. Currently, all *Osteospermum* available through The Flower Fields have an upright growth habit, a range of height options, flower forms and even some variegated foliage that will give color in the garden even after flowers fade during the heat of summer. Another star in the early spring garden is the



*Argyranthemum*, with a whole range of new colors offered, including the new Bright Carmine that is the first red to be offered in the market! Being mindful that the consumer hopes (and these days even expects) color from spring through fall, include other outstanding plants that will

perform throughout these months. *Bacopa* (the Showers series), *Brachyscome* and *Bracteantha* from Outback® Plants, *Calibrachoa* (select from the Colorburst and Liricashower series), *Diascia* (the Sun Chimes™ series) are all solid early season performers that will exceed the gardener's expectations. By selecting some of the earliest flowering cultivars, use a range of different petunias (*Cascadias*®, *Petitunia*®, *Marco Polo*™, *Doubloon*® and *Tear Drop*™ series) that love the cold but bloom even stronger as the days get longer and hotter!



One way to present these plants is to suggest a group of cultivars based on color combinations that will create stunning garden displays. Pair any of the deep purple *Sunscape Daisies* (*Malindi* or *Wildside*), *Jumbo Lilac* and *Mauve Delight Brachyscome* and blue *Bacopa* (*Blue Showers* and *Lavender Showers*) and *Blueberry Sachet Nemesia* with some bright yellow flowers like the *Bracteantha Florabella Gold* with *Cascadia Yellow Eye* petunia. For bright yellow accents, add *Golden Buttons Chrysocephalum* (another of the Outback Plants).

Fragrance gardens are another potential theme to work with, as the connection of our senses with the beauty of flowers is a very natural pairing. Crops like the



*Helichrysum Silver Spike*, *Sachet*™ *Nemesia*, *Chandelier*™ *Trailing Snapdragons*, *Petunias*, *Lavender* are all annuals from The Flower Fields that offer fragrance as a key feature. These can be planted with other perennials (*Dianthus*, *Sweet Woodruff*, etc.) and annuals (*Pansy* and *Viola*) that carry this feature. Using colors that are close on the color wheel in shades of white, silver and blue bringing a calm, harmonizing feel to the garden include *Chandelier Pearl White*, *Silver Spike*, *Cascadias Improved Charlie* and *Lavender*. Putting these together helps create a sensual experience for the eyes and noses of all gardeners to enjoy.

Colorful annual borders are made up of a range of heights and sizes for flowering. For the front of the border, low growing flowers are ideal. Plants with very low growing, growth habits include the *Bacopa*, *Calibrachoa*, *Diascia*, *Lamium*, *Petunia*, *Portulaca*, *Scaevola*, *trailing Snapdragons* and *Verbena*. Behind the low growing plants, mounded plants help build the heart of the border. This can be done with plants like *Brachyscome*, *Chrysocephalum*, *impatiens* (double *impatiens* for full sun and *New Guinea impatiens* for part shade conditions) and *Nemesia*. Tall plants complete the border by building strong background plants like *Angelonia*, *Argyranthemum*, *Bracteantha*, *Guara*, *Lavender* and *Mimulus*. For a combination of colors to create an exciting garden setting, combine full sun plants like *Summer Joy Portulaca* (rose or scarlet) mixed with *Petitunia Bright Dream* petunia *Bridal Showers Bacopa* and *Escapade Scarlet* verbenas for low growing border plants. Behind this place a nice mixture of *Tioga*® *Tangerine* double *impatiens*, *Bracteantha Florabella White* and *Argyranthemum Crystal white* and *Sundrop Yellow*. For taller, center or background plants, *Carita*™ *Angelonia White* and *Jelly Bean*™ *White Mimulus* provides nice upright spikes of color to help bring the vertical "bones" of the garden all summer long. This combination of vivid whites, yellows, orange and red flowers bring warm, sunny colors into the garden while blending in perfect harmony due to being closely positioned on the color wheel.



The possibilities for flowerbed combinations are as endless as the potential pairings of plants available through The Flower Fields program. By creating effective and easy to market combinations of plant materials, growers can partner with their retail customers to promote an easy to sell and satisfy program of garden plants. The possibilities are only as limited as your imagination.



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## TECHNICAL Q &amp; A

## When should I use Florel?

Q "I heard Florel® can be used on poinsettias to increase branching and quality. Are there any suggestions on how to apply this chemical?"

A Florel is the commercial name for ethephon phosphonic acid. Florel® has been shown to have beneficial effects when used on poinsettias, such as increasing uniformity of branching, increasing the number of branches, and aiding in height control.

Timing when using Florel is critical. "Sandwiching" the application around the pinch yields the best results. The first application should be made approximately 3 days before pinch and the second about 1 week after pinch. The suggested concentration of Florel is 500ppm. We suggest that a

small-scale trial be done if this is your first time applying this chemical to poinsettias. Many people have found that 300-350ppm works well and is less risky.

Florel is absorbed by the plant tissue, and due to a change in pH, releases ethylene. For this reason, Florel should only be applied to plants that are not under any sort of stress. If the plants are under stress when the chemical is applied, the Ethylene produced by Florel will have a more serious effect exaggerating the stress the plant is already under and possibly decreasing the quality significantly. To avoid this, water the plants in the morning and

apply Florel in the late afternoon, or on a cloudy day when the soil is moist.

Keep in mind that Florel will not only

increase branching, but it also acts as a growth regulator. While the chemical is working to increase uniform breaks, it also controls internode elongation. Any regularly scheduled PGR applications should be delayed until the plant starts

actively growing again. Use the Graphical Tracking software on our website to help determine when the next PGR application should be made: [http://www.ecke.com/html/h\\_points/points\\_tech.html](http://www.ecke.com/html/h_points/points_tech.html)

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