

Abstract:

In the past four decades, the handling and marketing of cut flowers in the United States has undergone dramatic changes. The local production and specialized retailing of the 1950's has been replaced by a system where flowers produced almost anywhere in the world are largely sold by mass-market retailers. Despite a substantial increase in total sales of flowers during this period, and a considerable reduction in real dollar retail prices, per capita consumption of cut flowers is low compared to that in other major markets. This may partly be explained by differences in lifestyle and culture, but a major component of the low sales of cut flowers in the U.S. is customer dissatisfaction with quality, particularly vase life, of the flowers that they purchase, whatever the price. Poor vase life is the result of long transportation times, excessive storage durations, and poor temperature management in the supply chain. Mass markets have a great opportunity to alter the cut flower consumption pattern in the U.S. by demanding better postharvest handling of the flowers that they sell, and thereby providing high quality flowers with long vase life.