

Abstract:

Marketing of many Australian native cut flowers is limited by their variability and short vase life. The effect of pre-harvest factors on postharvest quality of such floral crops is generally poorly understood. We have examined some of the factors affecting vase life of pink waxflower (*Eriostemon australasius*) and NSW Christmas bush (*Ceratopetalum gummiferum*). Vase life varied significantly between *Eriostemon* varieties and was increased by harvesting at the bud stage instead of at commercial maturity (50% open). Protected cropping of NSW Christmas bush could increase vase life relative to field grown material, but results were not consistent for all locations. Larger NSW Christmas bush stems had significantly longer vase lives than smaller pieces. Differences in vase life between the largest (>40g) and smallest (<20g) stems were increased when the material was stored for 12 days at 5°C. Although large diameter stems took up the most water in total, small diameter stems took up more water per gram fresh weight. This suggests that stem conductance is not a limiting factor, but that loss of carbohydrates may contribute to premature senescence in NSW Christmas bush.