

Spring lasts all year at Deiter's Greenhouse

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MANHEIM — With May almost here, and springtime weather elusive, most homeowners and gardeners are itching to work in the soil and get those beautiful flowers and delicious vegetable plants started.

As the weather improves, most people visit their local greenhouse to purchase the plants they need. When they do, they are seeing the results of many months of labor on the part of the greenhouse owners, who have planned and planted throughout the winter to have plants in peak condition now.

Deiter's Greenhouse is a family-owned operation near Manheim which began as a hobby and has developed into a thriving business. It has grown because of the Deiters' fondness of growing things. A visit there is like a step into spring. In fact, Paul Deiter

says, "It's springtime all the time around here."

The family operation consists of Paul and his wife Esther, and two of their children, Jay Paul and Delores. They hire part-time help as needed, but the family shares the primary responsibilities and chores.

It is actually Mrs. Deiter who begins the preparations for this busy season in January and February by sowing the seeds which will later be tenderly and carefully transplanted into flats for growing and resale.

"I start them off by doing the sowing, and then we transplant them. We are rather particular when it comes to transplanting," she observes, "For this enormous, exacting job they hire about six women."

Paul Deiter points out, "We enjoy working with the plants, watching them grow gives us



Deiter's Greenhouse, Manheim, operates this market stand at Roots Auction where the Deiter family can be found every Tuesday selling their beautiful plants.

satisfaction. It is amazing all the varieties and colors that are available." He adds, "We work together as a family. Each one has their assigned work to do. When everybody helps, everything goes smoothly."

To keep the greenhouse operating efficiently, Paul says, "Management is the biggest part of it. If everyone does his job cheerfully, it gets done well."

There's no question that there is plenty of work in the greenhouses. Mrs. Deiter notes, "If you want nice plants, it takes sticking with it."

Nice plants are what the Deiters offer, and in profusion. Their specialty is geraniums and at this time of the year, the greenhouses abound in blooming geraniums, awaiting resale to customers. Deiter says they specialize in them because "We just enjoy them. It's a flower that most women like to plant."

Both Paul and Esther grew up on farms, and it was about 30 years ago that they began growing celery intensively.

"We started growing celery plants," Paul recalls. "We used to grow about six to eight acres of celery, but now we're down to about 1½ acres."

It is the home-grown celery which keeps their market stand at Roots in business through the slow winter months. They also start celery for local farmers.

For their initial celery efforts they built a 30x15 foot greenhouse onto their barn, and thought it was large. Now they have greenhouses which measure 60 x 144 feet.

Mrs. Deiter recalls, "We always like flowers and plants, and we gradually got to selling more." At first their two daughters took a few plants along to market and then the demand increased each year. About 10 years ago they decided to



Mr. and Mrs. Mylin Harnish work to prepare the geraniums for sale to customers both at the retail store on the farm and at the stand at Roots Market. These represent just a few of the thousands of geraniums the Deiters will sell this spring.



This is a view of bedding plants awaiting customers - and spring. As soon as the weather allows, more and more people will be ready to get those spring vegetables into the ground for some delicious summer eating.



This neighbor works at the greenhouse preparing planters for retail customers. These planters offer beauty to those who have just a small amount of space in which to grow outdoor plants.

go into flowers in a more extensive way and now they grow thousands of plants each year, both bedding and house plants.

Roots Market is their main outlet away from the farm, and they have both an indoor and an outdoor stand in the summer. They also take some plants to their daughter who lives on the eastern shore of Maryland and who operates a roadside stand there, called Graybill's Farm Market.

How did they learn the intricacies of growing all these plants commercially? Paul says, "It comes by experience. You don't learn overnight and you don't learn in books. You learn by doing." Mrs. Deiter adds, "You learn by talking to others."

Daughter Delores agrees, "We had to learn as we went along. We are still learning."

"You have to be a plant doctor", Delores says. "Customers ask all kinds of questions, more than you can think of. But here are basic principles you go by." She says the first question she always asks of people purchasing house plants is what kind of light they will be growing in. And, she adds, "It is far easier to kill a plant by overwatering it than by underwatering it."

Disease and mildew are constant threats to the greenhouse operator, but Paul says, "It is something that can be worked with. Knowledge helps to prevent it. You learn to recognize disease as you work around the plants."

Paul is convinced that there is no limit to the number of plants you can sell if they are of high quality

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