



Diane Miller, gathering flowers for fresh arrangements she designs, oversees the retail side of the Miller Plant Farm business. She also handles the continuing flow of office paperwork and has computerized the farm's recordkeeping systems.

Miller Plant Farm Blooms With Springtime

JOYCE BUPP

York Co. Correspondent

YORK (York Co.) — In 1929, the stock market crashed and the nation's economy began its slide into the deep financial pit which would come to be known as the Great Depression.

But at a family farm south of the growing city of York, Jacob and Ada Miller were expanding their agriculture enterprise with a building addition. The new endeavor was a small greenhouse, facing south and attached to their farm home.

Miller's goal was to get a head start on the vegetable seedlings they planted each year to supply their bustling produce business. Then, as now, the earliest produce commanded the best prices; the indoor start would give Miller's tomatoes and peppers a three-week advance in the competitive downtown farmers' markets.

"And when he was finished with his vegetable plants, Grandma would start flower seedlings," relates David Miller. The third-generation horticulturist now operates the greatly-expanded Miller Plant Farm on Indian Rock Dam Road with his nephew and business partner, Steve Slyder. His parents, John and Betty Miller, are "retired," but still put in long days helping with the family business.

In January, Miller Plant Farm was named Agribusiness of the Year by the York Chamber of Commerce. Three generations of family members remain actively involved in the diverse enterprises of more than 60,000 square feet of space in 27 greenhouses and working bays, retail plant and produce sales, field crops, a herd of beef cattle and maintaining stands at two area farmers' markets.

As Jacob Miller's success with his early seedlings became known, neighbors urged him to start extras for them to purchase. Started in sand, the fledgling plants were sold bare root, wrapped in newspaper. Seedlings were also one more attraction for the J.L. Miller customers at the bustling city farmers' markets, where city housewives shopped several times weekly for fresh produce and meats.

While two days each week

"tending market" is still part of the Miller Plant Farms operation, on-farm sales have become a rapidly expanding part of current business. That enterprise peaks in mid-to-late spring, when both wholesale and retail plant customers generate a steady line of traffic in and out the farm lane. Customers are from as close as neighbors up the road to businesses in adjoining states.

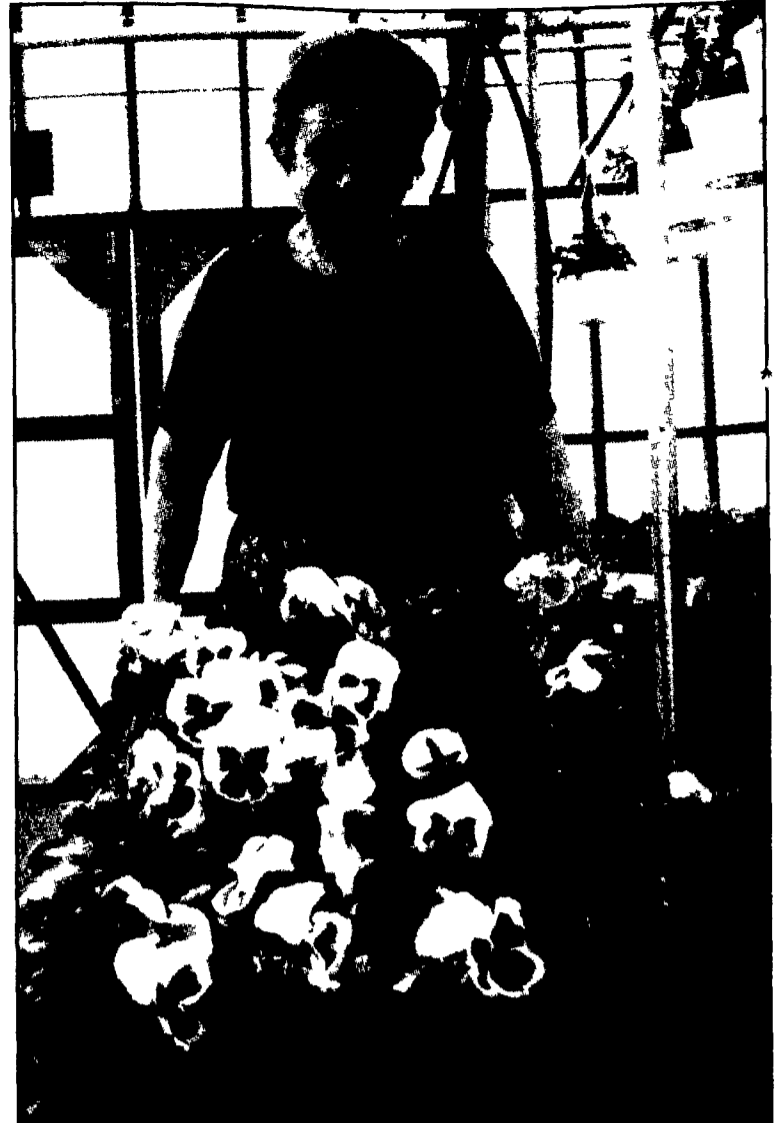
The earliest plantings of seeds start in February, with the pace picking up in March; by April, transplanting becomes a non-stop task for the crew of ladies who devote their workdays to the job. In addition, spring holidays bring a high demand for blooming potted plants ready for the retail side's Easter and Mother's Day flower-

buying season."

"May is a real hectic month," says Miller in understatement. "We try to refill the greenhouses for another turn of plants, get field work done, plant produce crops outside. It just about runs you ragged."

Meanwhile, planning ahead never ends. While customers may still be buying some tail-end annuals to fill empty spots in their summer gardens, Miller must be making arrangements to accommodate the thousands of Christmas poinsettia cuttings which arrive in August.

Seedlings play a vital role in the Miller Plant Farm business and, like all babies, are delicate, with special needs. To maximize their seedling success, Miller utilizes



Though "retired," Betty Miller often prepares lunch for more than a dozen of the Miller Plant Farm work crew, as well as continues to help in the greenhouse operations, like gathering this cart of sprightly pansies for spring sales.

specialized equipment, some purchased and some he designed and built.

A vacuum seeder, which has made starting even the tiniest seeds more efficient, is a table-top piece of equipment which works somewhat comparably to a field

drill for grain. Prepared flats filled with tiny square sections of planting medium are fed through the seeder, which is equipped with an electric eye and tucks a seed into each miniature "pot." Because each tiny plant begins growing in

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OMESTEAD NOTES



This plant sculpture by Charm House, Leola, inspires ideas for inside and outside the home.



Decorate, Entertain, Garden With Style

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
EPHRATA (Lancaster Co.) — Ideas for decorating, entertaining, and gardening with style made the annual Kitchen Kaper Tulip Tour a visual delight for more than 600 people on Monday.

"I like this tour because it's hard for me to envision what something looks like on paper. But if I can see a home layout, I have a better idea if it will work for me," said a tour participant.

The 12th annual tour sponsored by the Woman's Club of Ephrata featured nine sites. Homes on the tour vary from the pricey to the more modest. Some are filled with rare antiques, family heirlooms, collectable art, and artifacts from world travels. Decorating styles vary from formal to comfortable eclectic, but each one sparks unique ideas to take home and incorporate into one's own individual style.

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