

# A Dream Of Summertime

## Horticulturalist Releases Sunflower Trial Results

**DAVE LEFEVER**  
Lancaster Farming Staff

**UNIVERSITY PARK**  
(Centre Co.) — Sunflowers continue to be a big favorite at farm markets throughout the region.

"People go bonkers over them," said Steve Bogash, Penn State horticultural agent from Franklin County. "Their popularity doesn't seem to be waning."

According to Bogash, growers and marketers can benefit by cultivating varieties that are the most productive, best suited to growing in the region, and well-liked by customers.

Bogash helped coordinate the second annual sunflower trials in the state last year. The results can help growers and marketers make decisions about what varieties will boost their income from fresh flower sales this summer.

"Joker," a variety with red disc flowers and outer petals that range from orange-red to yellow-red, has been the most consistent performer over the past several years, according to Bogash. While Joker has not received the highest rating overall, marketers have found it does well in the marketplace, he said.

**2002 Sunflower Evaluation**  
Steve Bogash  
Horticulture Agent  
Joshua McCulloch and  
Gwen Umbreit  
Program Assistants

For the 2002 growing season, growers working in cooperation with Penn State Cooperative Extension hosted on-farm cut flower sunflower trials at five sites scattered throughout Pennsylvania. In total, 34 cultivars were provided to the host farms.

For the second year of these trials, it is very important to note the difficult growing conditions during the 2002 season as there was very little rainfall after spring. This probably resulted in reduced leaf spotting and other fungal pathogens, but certainly limited growth and regrowth after first harvest on sites without irrigation. In spite of the difficult growing season, a number of cultivars stood out from the pack. It will be interesting to rerun the trial in 2003 with many of last year's entries and see how they fare under another seasons growing conditions.

Each grower was provided with a minimum of 25 seeds for each cultivar they were trialing and an evaluation notebook to keep during the season. Cultivars were tracked for number and length of stems, color, and flower size. Cooperators were asked to score the plants using a 1-5 scale with 5 as the highest score in the following areas: Marketability, Vase Life, Color, and an Overall Rating.

While every grower provided evaluations based on

marketability, color and an overall rating, vase life was only evaluated on one site. We did a vigorous vase life trial at the Franklin County Horticulture Center which will be discussed later in this report.

The "Strongly Recommended" varieties below all scored 4 or higher in the overall rating and the second category of "Worth Growing" scored 3 to 3.9. Failing to make an overall rating of at least 3 does not mean a specific cultivar should be discounted completely. The harsh growing season, specific needs of the growers, and other factors could very likely remove a cultivar that make be excellent for your use.

Strongly recommended varieties for specialty cut flower production:

- Brilliance (overall rating 4) Medium yellow with a dark brown disk. A classic sunflower, but some growers found the heads too large. Pollen-free.

- Double Solar (overall rating 4) Golden yellow with no visible disk. Very late to bloom with stunning single flowers. Not your classic sunflower. Pollen-free.

- Full Sun (overall rating 4.75) Gold petals with a yellow brown disk. Classic single-stem sunflower similar to Sunbright. Pollen-free.

- Goldburst (overall rating 4) Full double sunflower a little smaller than Double Solar with gold petals that fade to slightly green on the disk.

- Joker (overall rating 3.50) Red disc flowers with outer petals that range from orange-red to yellow-red. Highly variable in color range. While Joker's overall score is lower than others in this category, many growers find this cultivar very marketable. Pollen-free.

- Moonbright (overall rating 5) Tall single stem cut flower with yellow petals and a brown disc. Flower size 5-8 inches, some sites commented that the flowers are a little too large for florist trade. Pollen-free.

- Sunbeam (overall rating 4) Golden yellow with a green / gold center. Mostly pollen free.

- Sunbright (overall rating 5) Golden yellow with a brown disc. Growers report that this flower is what florists want and should be the measuring stick for other single sunflowers. Pollen free.

- Sunbright Supreme (overall rating 4) Gold with a brown disk. Blooms a little earlier than Sunbright. Some pollen.

Worth growing, but falling slightly short of the strongly

recommended list:

- Dorado Select (overall rating 3.75) Golden petals with a dark face. Good long stems and pollen free.

- Starburst Lemon Aura (overall rating 3) Growers liked the color and had good acceptance among florists. They noted that this one had some problems, but due to marketability, they would try it again. Pollen-free.

- Terra Cotta (overall rating 3) Unique orangish-brown color with some specialty market potential. Pollen-free.

Varieties that rated highly in 2001 but failed to make the grade in 2002 include Golden Glory, Goldrush, Holiday, Munchkin, New Cut Gallardia, Soraya, Summertime, Sunsplash, and Ikarus. These may be worth consideration as our cooperators varied quite a lot in the amount of irrigation water they had available this year and their individual marketing niches.

### Vase Life Trials

A complete vase life trial was run at the Franklin County Horticulture Center. All flowers were placed directly into water as harvested. Once in our processing area, stems were stripped, then dipped into a mild soap solution, then

(Turn to Page E7)



**Wholesale Auction**  
of  
Lancaster County  
Produce At Its  
Finest



**OPENING DAY**  
**Thursday, March 20**  
**Sale at 10:00 A.M.**



Please bring  
PA Nursery License  
for year 2003




**Leola Produce Auction, Inc.**  
*Providing prompt, friendly service since 1983*

Brethern Chruuch Road  
Leola, PA 17540  
*Season: March through November*



OFFICE 717-656-9592  
FAX 717-656-8346

Lic. #AH000028-L



# Weaverland Auction

## Produce - Flowers

Opening Date March 20, 2003  
Starting 9:00 A.M.

Open every Tues. & Thurs.  
More days added as needed

2003 Nursery license required to sell plants

**Weaverland Auction**  
1030 Long Lane Road • New Holland, PA 17557

Your business is greatly appreciated.  
Thank You!

**We sell local and shipped:**  
Produce • Flowers  
Shrubs • Bushes  
Lawn Ornaments



Phone: (717) 355-0834  
Fax: (717) 355-9429

