

HOW HARD DO WE WORK?

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*Light Oaks, Milton,
Stoke-on-Trent*

With the introduction of modern herbicides and machinery is there more time to spare when the spring planting is over? On our nursery we have no mechanisation at all as the soil is moist, peaty and light, with no stones at all. We plant everything in beds by hand as you will see on the film and we crop the ground heavily. After shrub planting, as we have no container trade we decided to increase and extend our selling time by producing about 250 to 300 thousand spring and summer flowering border and herbaceous plants. We sell these on our two outdoor market stalls in local towns in the industrial Potteries area, which is a mainstay of our existence.

We operate our nursery as three small units. The smallest, operated by my father and two women part-time workers, produces from seed as many plants as possible in boxes of 60, for transplanting on to spare beds in the nursery. As we use farmyard manure regularly we find this good preparation for rotation of shrub planting.

The second unit of 4 acres is operated by my brother and one man. Here we grow our ornamentals and flowering trees from whips or young grafts, which we buy in. His empty beds are also filled with root plants.

The third and largest unit of 9 acres and increasing one acre every two years is operated by myself with two men and one student during summer holidays for picking off small plants. This unit is put over to mixed flowering shrubs, rhododendrons and conifers in variety of which we produce a great deal of our own stock from cuttings of various types and from layers. The empty beds here are also filled with herbaceous and border plants such as wallflowers, polyanthus, primulas, lupins, geums, delphiniums, golden ball, scabious, rock plants, etc. Planting starts about mid-June and continues until September. During this time we also have to keep the shrubs clean as we do not use any Simazine-type herbicides, only Parquat if the season is wet and the weeds grow too quickly for hand control. We can carry on planting in dry weather as the soil is moist and does not dry out.

(Editor's Note: Readers who have not seen Mr. Thursfield's slides, which were shown at the Conference, will have difficulty in visualising the extraordinarily intensive cropping and high output from this nursery)