

Discussion Group: Direct Sticking of Cuttings Session

Chris Ames

Monrovia Nursery Company, Oregon 97114

The topics discussed during the Direct Sticking of Cuttings Session were the following; direct sticking into the final container for sales (#1 gal), coir versus peat, mortality when determining direct stick versus other methods, tray sizes and shapes, copper-treated trays, recycling of trays, paying piece rate, bromine, mist booms, and multiple cuttings per cell. Most of the discussion focused around the use of coir as a substitute for peat moss, this seems to be a big issue right now. The following are comments made during the discussion.

A question was posed to the group about the use of coconut coir. Most people in the session use peat moss, and many have tried coir. Quality problems with coir include; high salts potentially and coir may make nitrogen unavailable to the plant. It was suggested that when purchasing coir, use inland sources that may contain fewer salts. It was also discussed that coir may tie up nitrogen in the soil making it unavailable to the plants. A comment was also made about coir not breaking down as fast as peat and that it is easier to wet than peat. Bruce Briggs asked if anyone had used rice hulls and Rob Sloan answered that he had and they were cheap and did a good job.

Another topic discussed was direct sticking into the final saleable container (specifically a #1 gal container). Comments made indicated that *Hydrangea* was a genus where this worked well. Bruce Briggs commented on getting moss and liverwort growth in #1's and your wood could get used up quickly when direct sticking into them. It was determined that this may be a labor tradeoff.

Cindy Lou Pease posed a percent mortality question to the group. She has not done a lot of direct stick and was curious about at what percentage should you stick into open flats or direct stick. Three comments were made about this. One said 70% was the percent mortality that they used, another said space was the issue, and the third said that everything was direct stuck to avoid potting and transplant shock.

Sticking multiples of cuttings into a single cell or pot was also discussed. Bruce Lane commented that they do what the customer wants in the final product. Multiples will give a bushier plant quicker and give more cutting wood. Basically, what does a customer expect?

With increased use of plug trays, recycling can be a problem. Christine Ames suggested checking with manufacturer replicates to see if they can help find methods of disposal or recycling.

Arda Berryhill spoke about paying piece rate. She just recently toured the Southern Region and found out that many nurseries pay their employees based on piece rate. She asked if that was happening here and someone had seen it done but said they were disappointed with all of the paperwork required.

Bromine was brought up for discussion and many members said that they have used it for several years with good success. Phytotoxicity to certain varieties was a concern but had not been encountered yet. Bromine will corrode stainless steel.