

## Cutting Through the Fluff®

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### INTRODUCTION

I like, no I really love, one liners...such as:

- "If it ain't broke...don't fix it" (Unknown Author)
- "That's no deal" (Nurseryman John Machen)
- "If you don't add value...then it's waste" (Henry Ford)
- "You haven't made a dime...till you sell number 12 of a dozen" (JC Penney)
- "We don't want to bake any birthday cakes" (Charlie Parkerson)

I use a multitude of one liners every day while conversing with my co-workers and family. On the surface one liners seem simple, they just roll off your tongue. However, when we give them more in-depth thought we find they are more like a key helping us unlock a much larger and more complex idea.

The purpose of this paper is to share with you my thoughts about plants having a birthday. What comes into your mind when you think about the word birthday? What does it mean to you? Something like: growing older, 1 year, a celebration, 12 months, gift giving, cake, ice cream, making wishes that you can't tell anyone about or they won't come true. These are basically happy and fun thoughts.

On the other hand if one of my plants has a birthday, while on our farm, then I am sad and angry.

Plant birthdays are not based on 365 days but on the logical, ideal production time that is established before the crop is started. Maximum profitability is achieved when the plant is sold or processed before its birthday.

Typical birthdays might be:

	Plant	Size (cm)	Source	Birthday
A	<i>Ilex</i>	7	Unrooted cutting	11 months
B	<i>Ilex</i>	27	7-cm liner (A)	18–24 months
C	pansy ( <i>Viola</i> sp.)	13	72 plug	60 days
D	tomato ( <i>Solanum lycopersicum</i> )	18	144 plug	60 days
E	<i>Quercus</i>	45	27-cm liner	12–18 months

**Example A:** In April of each year, an unrooted *Ilex* cutting is direct stuck into a 7 cm × 18 cell tray inside a poly house that is designed to produce a crop every 12 months. The *Ilex* is rooted, grown, and pruned to the desired size, overwintered, and harvested in March.

The *Ilex* cannot have a birthday because the next crop must take its place.

Now, you might think, "Gosh 11 months is a long time to produce a liner. My plants root in 3 weeks, and then they are out of the propagation department." Then 3 weeks is your plants' birthday.

**Example B:** The liner in Example A is planted in February-March each year. It is grown can tight for 12 months, spaced the following spring and sold in the fall (18 months) or subsequent spring (24 months) after planting. On our nursery, if a plant has a birthday it is destroyed. Holding on is false hope and the maintenance costs far outweighing what you can sell a junk plant for?

**Example C:** Pansies are planted the last week of August. harvest starts mid-October. Its birthday is in November, and must go because the spring pansy crop has to be planted.

I think you get the point, celebrate on the way to the bank not by baking birthday cakes.