



Petunias drive bedding plant production for growers seeing a steady road ahead.

By Patrick Alan Coleman

Bedding plants are beloved by consumers who seek the annual color to make their property pop from spring to fall. To serve those consumers, growers are leaning in to the power of the petunia with its enormous varieties of colors, shapes and habits, according to our 2025 State of Annuals research report. And of the growers surveyed, the expectation is that the business of annuals will remain steady, as producers plan on even-keeled sales, while expecting to hold back on price increases for the coming year.

But even within this reliable category, growers still have expectations and frustrations. Labor and pest pressure drive concerns, while better disease resistance, ease of growing and flower color top the wish list growers have for breeders.

Editor's note: Not all percentages add up to 100% due to rounding, non-responses and some questions allowing respondents to select multiple answers.



Survey methodology: We surveyed more than 100 wholesale greenhouse operators, as well as garden center owners, operators and managers who also grow bedding plants for their own retail, based in the U.S. and Canada. The following statistics were gathered via an online survey conducted in September. Answers were collected in October.

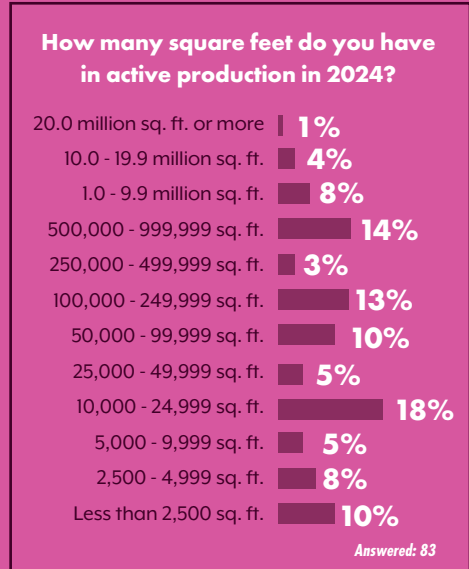
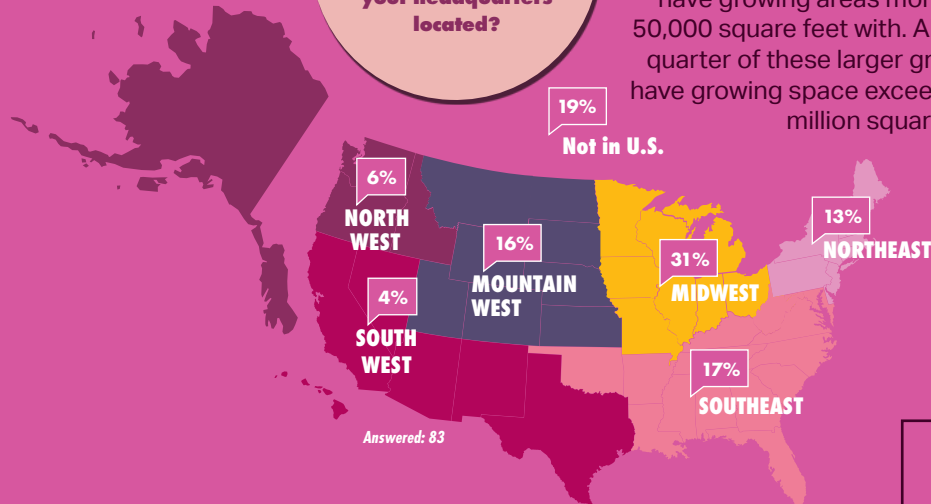
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Who's growing?

A third of the responding growers producing bedding plants are located in the Midwest of the United States. Outside of the Midwest, most of the responding growers are producing annuals in the east. Fewer are in the west, with about 20% of respondents growing in areas west of the Rocky Mountains. Just slightly fewer are growing in areas outside of the United States, including Canada.

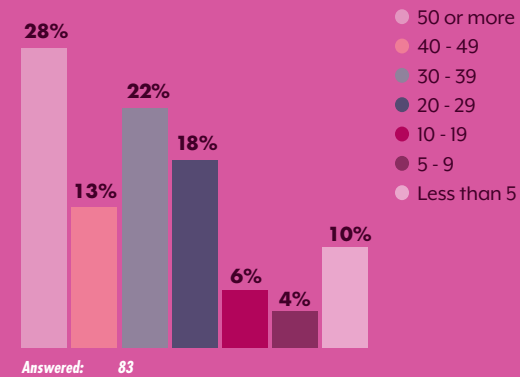


These businesses have plenty of experience, too. Well over half have been in business for more than 20 years. In terms of size, most of the respondents have growing areas more than 50,000 square feet with. About a quarter of these larger growers have growing space exceeding a million square feet.



An overwhelming percentage of respondents (92%) are using that active production area to produce finished plants, as opposed to just 7% who are growing plants for propagation. And a solid majority (68%) grow custom mixes.

How many years has your growing operation been in business?



What type of product do you produce?



Turn up the volume

To get a lay of the production landscape, respondents were asked to rank their annuals by production volume on a scale of 1 to 5. The results showed five plants that topped production volume (and dominated the rest of the survey as well): petunia, geranium, begonia, impatiens and marigold. Of these five annuals, petunias were the volume leader, ranked first by most growers responding to the survey. Geraniums were more likely to be ranked third than second or first in production volume, while impatiens were most likely to be ranked fourth or fifth.

Please rank the top 5 annual types by 2024 production volume at your greenhouse.

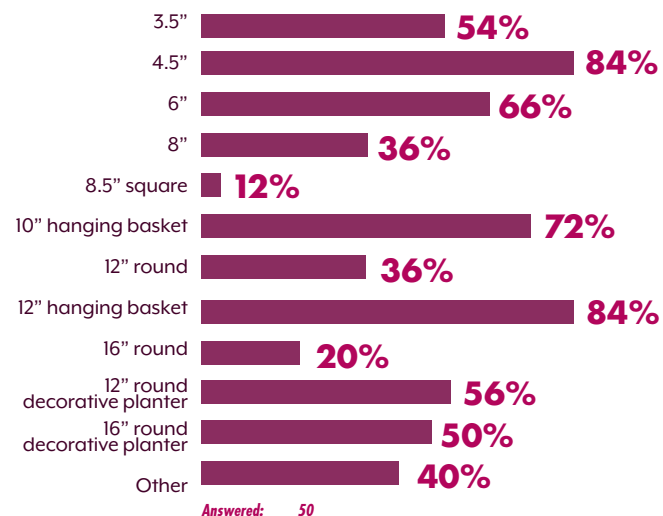


Size matters

When it comes to container sizes growers offer, there are two clear leaders. The survey revealed that 84% of respondents grow both 4.6-inch pots and 12-inch hanging baskets. Fewer grow 10-inch hanging baskets (72%) and 6-inch pots (66%). Decorative planters are popular offerings, with 12- and 16-inch decorative planters being offered by 56% and 50% of respondents, respectively. But 40% of respondents were growing in "other" containers — primarily multicell packs based on their responses — which included 1801, 1204 and 606 inserts, as well as 4- and 6-pony packs.

The least-grown container sizes included 12- and 16-inch rounds (36% and 20%), as well as 8.5-inch square (12%).

What sizes of annuals do you produce? (Select all that apply.)



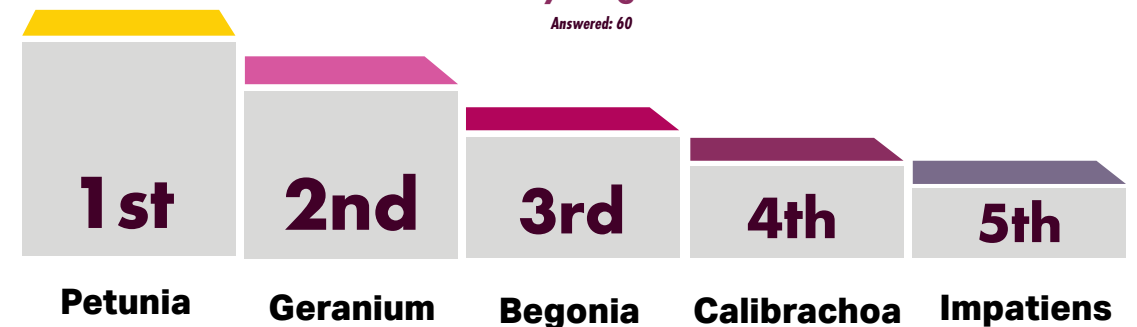
Grow me the money

Three bedding plants are dominant when it comes to sales volume. Petunias are the champion, with 33% of respondents citing them as sales volume leaders. Rounding out the top three are geranium and begonia. Five common bedding plants did not even place. Angelonia, celosia, ipomea, verbena and viola were volume leaders for none of the respondents.

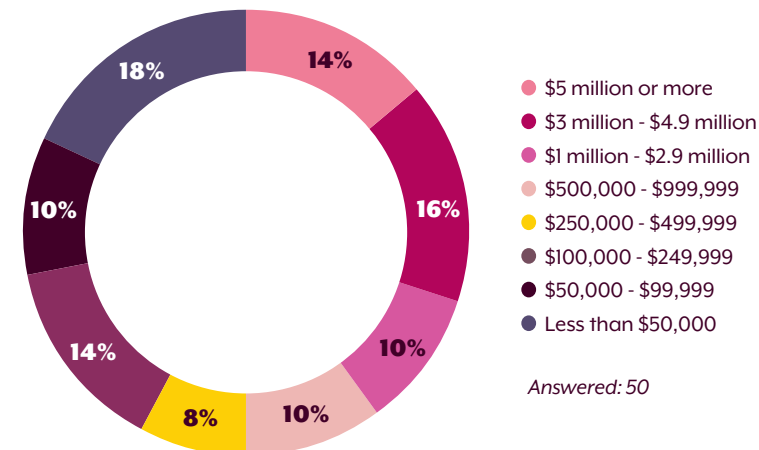
That doesn't mean the plants aren't capable of driving sales volume. In sales volume rankings, verbena, ipomoea, celosia and angelonia were all given a fifth-place ranking by a small subset of growers, with angelonia being the most chosen for that rank among them.

However, the top five plants ranked for sales volume were the usual suspects: petunia, geranium, begonia, calibrachoa and impatiens. Petunia received the most first-place rankings, while calibrachoa received the most second- and third-place rankings. Geranium received the most fourth-place rankings of these five, while impatiens was scored fifth more than any other top ranked annual in sales volume.

Please rank your top 5 annual types by 2024 sales volume at your greenhouse.



What do you anticipate your greenhouse's approximate 2024 gross sales of annuals to be?



In terms of sales, 50% of respondents reported that gross sales of bedding plants in 2024 will be over \$500,000. Of those higher sales, most will be between \$3 million and 5 million. Of those reporting annual gross sales of bedding plants below \$500,000 in 2024, most reported sales will be less than \$50,000.

Do you anticipate your sales of annual crops to increase, decrease or remain about the same in 2025 compared with 2024?

Answered: 50

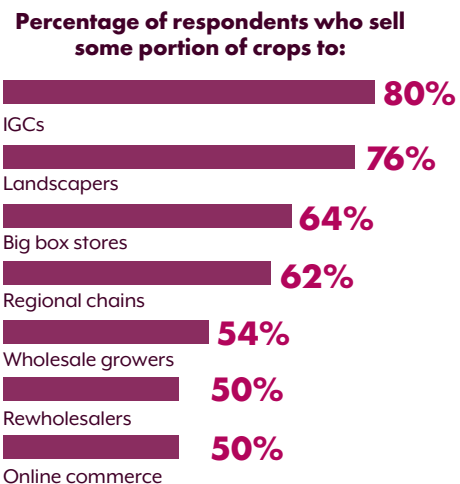


Sales also seem to be stable. When asked to forecast sales activity in 2025, 60% of respondents expected sales to stay the same. Comparatively, 38% expected an increase, while only 2% projected a decline in sales.

About half of respondents have sold some percentage of their plants to customers that do not identify as any of the types of businesses listed. While the other types of business are not indicated in the data, one strong possibility is that these growers are selling a portion of plants direct to end consumers through their own retail operations.

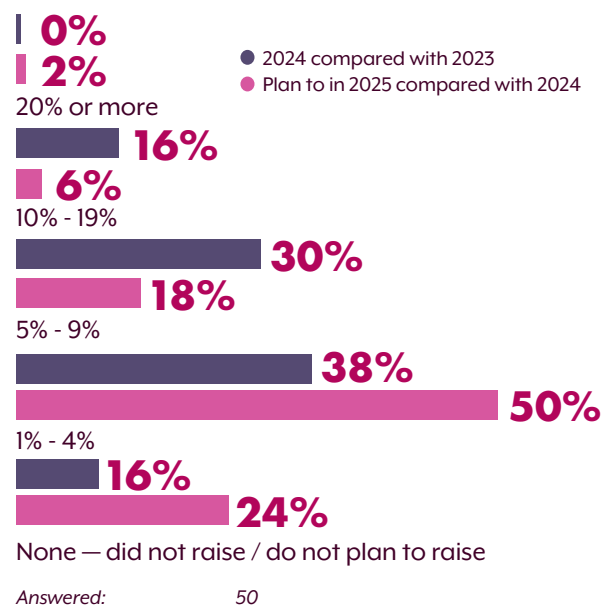
Who's buying?

When looking at the mix of those types of businesses growers are selling to, one stands out. A full 80% of respondents sell a portion of their plants directly to IGCs. The second most common customers are landscapers, followed by big box stores and regional chains. Wholesale growers and rewholesalers round out the list, with online commerce trailing last.



Growers were also asked if they'd raised prices for bedding plants in 2024 compared to 2023. A full 84% had increased the price of their plants by some amount, but none had by more than 20%. Most (68% of respondents) had enacted modest price increases between 1% and 9%. When asked what they planned to do with prices in the coming year, 75% planned on increasing prices, with most of those planning a price increase of only 1% to 4%.

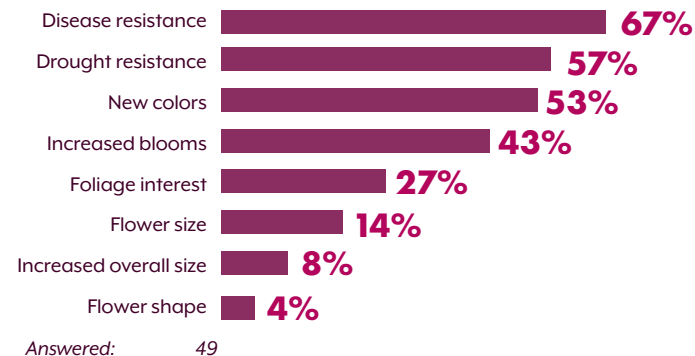
By what percentage have you raised the price of annuals?



What growers want

When asked for a wish list, growers hoped plant breeders would focus on four major areas, each weighted similarly. At the top of the list was disease resistance (67%), followed by drought resistance (57%), new colors (53%) and increased blooms (43%). Of least interest were increased overall size (8%) and flower shape (4%).

What areas should plant breeders focus on for the genetics of new annuals?



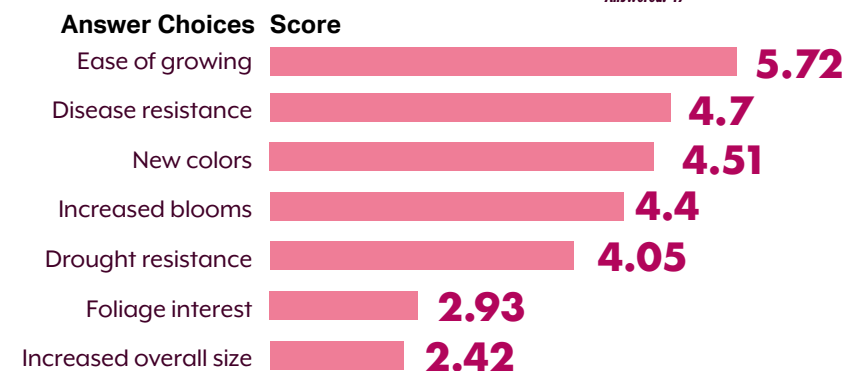
Growers also reported what would make them consider adding a new annual into production. Ranked in desirability, ease of growing came out easily on top, followed by disease resistance, new colors and increased blooms. Despite being an ask for new genetics, drought resistance was ranked fifth, and foliage interest and increased overall size trailed.



From most desirable to least desirable, what features would make you consider adding a new annual to your production?

(Scored by weighted average.)

Answered: 47



What is your greatest challenge in annual production?

27% Pest pressure



These preferences are directly tied into growers' production challenges. Of those challenges, pest pressure and labor were top of mind, while propagation resources and fertilizer needs concerned none. GM