Harvesting Alaska Peonies
Introduction

• Topics
  – What we did
  – What we have learned
  – Harvesting for sale
Starting off

• Where to begin
  – I had no idea
• No blueprint for selling Alaska flowers
Prior to Harvesting

• Contact buyers ASAP
  – Especially businesses
  – Helps in harvesting
Disbudding

- ensures max. flower size size
- Do it early and often
- Get to know field
Harvesting

• We started cutting last week of June
• Harvested Twice daily 6 days a week
  – More may have been needed
  – Some bloomed on plant
More Harvesting

• Very labor intensive
  – Took an hour for 2 people
• Use clean tools
• Watch for disease
• Mixed plots added difficulty
Crooked Stems

- Leave crooked stems and odd buds on plant
- Only 75% of flowers should be cut
- Stem length/harvest trade-off?
Bud Development

• Lots of research
  – Mixed results
  – Cutting stage can be key
• “marshmallow” stage
  – Very simple
• Example
# Development Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Hard tight bud, little petal color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Hard Tight bud, slight color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Firm tight bud, petals showing color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Slightly softer bud, &quot;squeezable&quot; (Marshmallow stage)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Loose or soft bud. Outer petal loosening, petals still firm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Very loose bud, &quot;hollow feel&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Almost out, petals curved inward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Open (optimum) petals reflexed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Petals reflexed and wilted or dropping</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Cultivars

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivar</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coral Sunset</td>
<td>Coral Semi-Double</td>
<td>1.5-3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festiva Maxima</td>
<td>White Double</td>
<td>1.5-4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maestro</td>
<td>Red Semi-Double</td>
<td>2.5-4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Shaylor</td>
<td>Blush-Pink Double</td>
<td>2.0-3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Hawaiian Coral</td>
<td>Pink Semi-Double</td>
<td>1.5-4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
More Cutting Stage

• Cutting stage depends on the cultivar
  – Also depends on sales
  – Individual trials

• Time to opening
  – Most significant finding
Sorting

• Bunched into fives and tens
• Match stem length and bud size
• Labor intensive
• Organization is important
• Keep track of dates
• Count flowers
• Strip leaves
• Use a cool area
• Package flowers now
Storage

- Cold storage is necessary
  - Remove field heat
  - Store for sale
- Refrigerator, not a good idea
More Cooling

• Ethylene
  – Separate from vegetables

• Modified air-conditioners?
  – Cheaper

• Two stage units?
  – Sorting, and initial cooling
Pulsing

- Water and/or preservative
  - Adds cost
  - Adds handling
- Test results vary
- We didn’t do it
Contacting Buyers

• Florists
  – Bring samples

• Wholesalers
  – Difficult to call
  – Try e-mail
  – Some connections made
EBay

- Bunched 5’s, 10’s, 50’s, and 100’s
- None got any bids
- Other websites
  - flowerbuyer.com
Farmers Market

- High prices
- Low quantities?
- Networking, raises awareness
- Late cutting stage
More Farmers Market

- Very time consuming
  - wage should be included
- Transport costs
- Equipment and location costs
- Packaging can be cheap
- Market fluctuation
Florists

- Lower prices than farmers market
- Quantities may be higher
- Quality standards will be high
More Florists

• Delivery costs?
• Less Wages
• Market in Fairbanks?
• Insects?
  – Fumigation???
Supermarkets

- Similar florists in prices
- Vary in the way flowers are purchased
  - In house, or nationally
- Big movement in industry
More Supermarket

- Delivery required
- Maintain Flowers on shelf
- Packaging
- UPC bar code
- Not known for quality
Wholesale

- Lowest prices
- Sold to Mayesh Floral Distributors
- Got $1.25 per stem
- GBG early in season
  - Competition
More Wholesale

- Low costs
- Sell all flowers at once
- World wide integration
- Cut at early stage
Shipping

• Shipped Alaska Air Freight
• Total weight was about 140lb.
• Per stem cost $0.125
• Dropped off the night before
  – Cold storage at Terminal
• Left FBX at 7am reached L.A. by mid-afternoon
• Cold chain
Packing
• The End