



Peonies a Plenty? Not Yet, but . . .

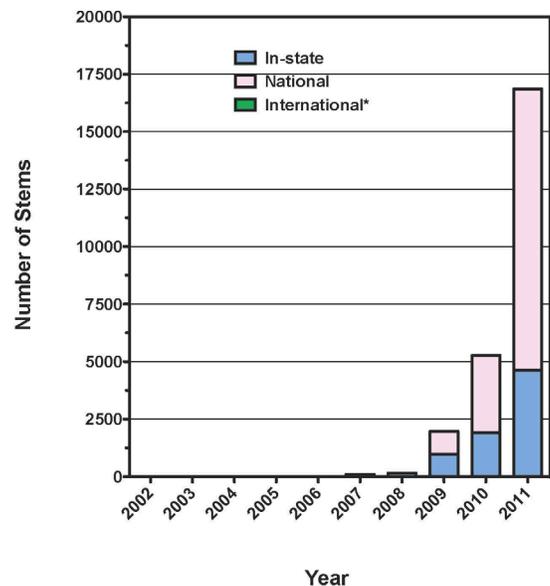
by
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The Agricultural and Forestry Research Station, UAF, is the agricultural research and development arm of the Land Grant College System (celebrating it's 150 birthday this year). The researchers at the Station which includes the Georgeson Botanical Garden horticultural research, has been assisting growers of all kinds in the Interior since 1906. Dr. Charles Georgeson introduced hundreds of plants into Alaska, everything from potatoes to "Sitka" roses, many of which are still grown today. Basil Benson introduced growers to soil warming techniques back in the 1950s. Dr. Arvo Kallio bred strawberries, raspberries, cabbages, sweet corn and tomatoes. All but one of his cultivars is still growing in Alaska farms and gardens. Dr. Don Dinkel pioneered the use of soil warming plastic mulches that have revolutionized the growth of warm season vegetables all over the state.

Add to this list a new industry that is beginning to make a tiny ripple in the multi-billion dollar world industry of fresh cut flowers. We started the research in 2001, and now there are 35 growers state-wide with 61,000 peony roots in the ground. Last year, nine of these growers marketed 16,000 fresh cut peony stems to florists, flower brokers, farmer's markets, direct to brides, and regional distributors all over the Lower 48. This year test shipments went to Taiwan, and several growers combined to make weekly shipments to Hawaii. Think of that - Alaska flowers in Hawaii!

Growers anticipate doubling, maybe even tripling, the sales for 2012. Nearly everything that met the high quality standards established by the Alaska Peony Growers Association was sold in 2011 for anywhere from \$3 to \$10 per stem! And, just think, it all started with your federal tax dollars matched with state funding through the Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station! Imagine that - 106 years later, and we are still doing some impressive research to support Alaska's growers!

Stems Sold by Location



*20 stems reported in 2011 for international shipments

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