

Display Tips for Farmers Markets

by Royce Schaneman, Ag Promotion Coordinator

Appearance

Attractive displays are a great aid in selling produce. Look over other grower's displays and borrow from the best ideas. Produce should be kept in the shade to help maintain quality and provide a pleasant shopping environment. The display should be off the ground so customers do not have to bend over to inspect the produce. Elbow-to-eye level is a good rule of thumb to use for proper display height. Tables, platforms, or truck tailgates may be used to display produce. Prop boxes at a slant toward the customers.

Quantity

Abundant displays attract attention. One grower may display green beans in a small bowl, which is refilled from a basket kept in the pickup. The effect is that few people see the green beans. In contrast, another grower may construct a mountain of radishes and the splash of color will draw people from across the street.

Color

Color contrast helps attract customers' attention. Choose the

color of your awning carefully. A blue covering can make peaches look green, while a yellow shade can make them look good. Keep in mind that darker colors attract heat.

Creative

Use creative display ideas. A "waterfall" of potatoes created by an inclined board covered with spuds of all shapes and colors; wicker flower-gathering baskets used to display a colorful collection of peppers, eggplants, and squash; or buckets of flowers lined up according to the colors of the spectrum, creating a rainbow effect from a distance, are a few examples of profit-making, crowd-capturing, creative display ideas. Other excellent display ideas are simpler, such as interspersing product displays with leaves, herbs, or flowers, or stringing balloons or chili peppers around the canopy or entryway.

Develop a Focus

If your focus is herbs, for example, fill up your space with herb plants, potpourri, and sachets. Get out in front of your display and look at it critically, from a customer's point of view. Everything should be clearly

visible, alive, and enticing. If it doesn't command attention, change it.

Signs

An attractive wooden sign with your farm name and logo painted on it helps your customers come back to you week after week, and makes it easier for them to refer friends to you. For the same reason, insist on setting up in the same location throughout the year. Make sure your farm sign is well above your display so customers can see it above a crowded booth, and put your farm name on your apron or cap.

Pictures of Your Farm

Talk with customers and hand out brochures about your farm and farming practices. Make customers feel part of your operation! Whenever possible, bring along a big, full-color farm photo or a series of smaller photos. Beneath the portraits include captions of your farm. Against the gorgeous layout of your farm, describe your farm and sustainable farming methods. While customers wait in line at the booth, they read the sign. Or the sign attracts them to the booth. (DJ)

Lawn Care Management Focus of March UNL Workshop

Get a headstart on planning lawn care and pest management at a half day, March 3 workshop at UNL's East Campus Union. Attendees will get a better understanding of how to be more efficient and effective in maintaining their lawns. They'll receive tips on proper timing and application of pesticides to control weeds, diseases, and insects in their lawn, plus advice on correct irrigation practices, plant and grass species selections, and mowing and fertilizing

basics. The workshop is 8 a.m. to noon. Presenters include UNL turfgrass specialists Roch Gaussoin and Robert Shearman, plant pathologist John Watkins, entomologist Fred Baxendale, horticulturists Don Steinegger and Anne Streich and extension educator John Fech. A walking tour of UNL East Campus turfgrass and landscape attractions, weather permitting, will be held after the workshop from 1-2:30 p.m. Pre-registration through Feb. 28 is \$15 per

person. After that date, the cost is \$20. Registration is limited to the first 200. To register, send a check to UNL Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at: Lawn Care Workshop, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, 377 Plant Sciences, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0724. For information, contact Streich at (402) 472-2811 or e-mail astreich2@unl.edu.

It's Garden Seed Catalog Time

For generations, Nebraskans have sat down during the dead of winter with seed catalogs, visions of spring gardens dancing in their heads.

These days, seed catalogs are arriving months earlier, along with dozens of catalogs for holiday food, decorations, and toys. But in a gardening aficionado's household, seed catalogs rise like cream to the top of the weekend reading pile. The temptation to curl up with a cat, a cup of coffee, and a pile of catalogs is so strong it often prevails over a long list of post-holiday to-do's.

Garden catalogs are the seed industry's way of introducing new cultivars, captivating their readers as surely as fashion

magazines showing the latest glitzy holiday fashions.

Armed with a stack of garden catalogs in your lap, you can start your spring garden wish list. Heirloom plants that reflect your ethnicity? Short-season seeds from Montana suitable for Nebraska Panhandle planting? These are available from specialty catalogs.

Some gardeners put pencil to paper and sketch their ideas out at this stage; others indulge themselves and order what just seems right in their mind's eye.

Regardless of your personal style, the following tips will help you be a smarter seed shopper:

— Shop locally if you can, but realize that some special

cultivars may not be available except through seed catalogs.

— Compare prices between catalogs and local stores, and among catalogs.

— Compare not only prices, but the number of seeds per pack. This varies depending on the type of plant and cultivar.

— Hybrids generally are more expensive, but their built-in resistance will often reduce the need for fungicide applications and the increased vigor usually increases yields higher than inbred cultivars.

— Order seeds for vegetables you or those in your household will eat, or that you'd like to introduce to them. Children who help plant vegetables are more likely to help eat them!

— When planning flower beds, picture a stair step progression, taller plants in back and shorter plants in front so you can see them.

Acreage Insights



Egg Eating by Chickens

by J.P. Jacob, F.B. Mather and H.R. Wilson

Egg eating in a laying flock can cost a producer considerable money. Like many bad habits, it is much easier to prevent egg eating than to cure the habit once it has developed. It is usually initiated by accidental egg breakage, but birds will then learn to break eggs themselves.

Causes

Egg eating occurs primarily in flocks that are kept on the floor (i.e., not in cages). A number of factors can contribute to egg eating. Egg eating can result when the hens are overcrowded, when light intensity is too bright, when there are inadequate nests, when the nests are not constructed properly, or when there is insufficient nest litter. Some small flock owners throw cracked or broken eggs on the floor for the chickens to eat. This practice will encourage egg eating.

Failure to house pullets before heavy egg production begins, failure to provide nests on range, or failure to train pullets to lay in nests may also cause egg eating to develop. When pullets begin laying, or when they are moved to the laying house, they should be trained to use the nests.

Providing roosts during the growing period contributes to greater ease in training pullets to use nests. A little time spent each day in putting floor layers in nests will assist in reducing egg breakage and reduce chances of

an egg eating outbreak.

The tendency to eat eggs can be aggravated by either a deficiency of calcium or vitamin D in the ration. Such deficiencies also contribute indirectly to egg eating by causing poor shell quality and broken eggs. If the flock is receiving a commercial layer ration, such deficiencies are rare. When a small flock owner mixes a commercial feed with scratch (i.e., cracked grains), they are diluting the previously complete diet. Under such circumstances, deficiencies may occur.

Control Measures

If there is a problem with egg eating in a flock, the following control measures may help:

1. Gather eggs more frequently. Once a day is not enough—three times or more is better.
2. Be sure plenty of nests are provided. Allow one regular type nest for each four layers or one square foot in a community type nest for each three to four layers.
3. Darken nests. Dark nests reduce egg breakage and egg eating as well as the numbers of dirty eggs produced.
4. Feeding of liquid milk for a few days often reduces egg eating.
5. Break an egg in a bowl and mix 1-2 teaspoons of ground pepper into it. Pour the mixture on the floor so the birds will eat it. The bad taste may reduce egg eating. (DJ)

Top Ten List

Top ten reasons to diversify with alternative agricultural and natural resources enterprises.

10. Current enterprise is not profitable.

9. Reduce financial risk; don't put all your eggs in one basket.

8. To increase income; often, existing enterprises do not allow additional family members to enter the business.

7. Provide for a more even cash-flow; sell products more than once or twice per year.

6. Utilize available resources; many times we underutilize our most abundant resources (i.e., grass and woodland).

5. A way for young people to develop a business; many alternative enterprises require low

levels of capital investment.

4. Personal preference; different strokes for different folks!

3. To add value to a product and capture a greater share of the consumers dollar; we need to sell more agricultural products and services and less commodities.

2. To meet a consumer need; our close proximity to several urban areas gives us the opportunity to sell lots of different goods and services to millions of consumers.

1. And the number one reason to diversify your farm operation by adding an alternative enterprise ... because it's FUN!

— from Ohio State University Extension (DJ)

— Select a color scheme or not! Have fun with an eclectic mix of color.

— While perennial flowers may reduce the time spent planting every spring, they aren't maintenance-free and they usually have shorter blooming periods than annuals. Plan to

plant annuals and perennials together to provide the most season-long color.

— Plant based on the amount of available sun. (DJ)

SOURCE: Susan Schoneweis, coordinator for home/environmental horticulture, NU/IANR