Woody Stems for Cut Flower Use

Seaberry FARM
Specialty Fruits and Flowers

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Why do florist use woody stems?

To accentuate design lines.
To produce a rustic or architectural look.
To add contrast and interest points.
Florists use woody stems to decorate for holidays and seasons.

Woody plants are the harbingers of seasons!
- Fall berries
- Christmas Holly
- Late winter pussy willow
- Spring lilac
Some woody stem products are symbols of deep cultural significance.
Farmers Markets--Woodies add value to bouquets with interest and structure.
History of woody cut stems

• Early French (1770s) forcing whole plants in caves and later Dutch lilac forcing.
• Wild-crafting evergreens, flowering dogwood, etc.
• Holly orcharding in New Jersey and Northeast.
• Florists, Jenkins Family in Virginia
• “Bush-whackers” migrate up and down the East Coast visiting nurseries, parks, estates, etc. doing annual “pruning” and selling to wholesale florists.
• And don’t let anyone forget that a rose is a woody stem...
Clarence Wolf looked out his office window one late afternoon to see one of his workers drive by with a load of holly. Curious, the then-president of New Jersey Silica Sand Co. dashed outside to find out where the man had found the berry-laden boughs.

The answer would one day result in Millville holly not only decorating the White House and hundreds of other homes during the holidays, but growing all over the world.

In fact, Wolf's curiosity that day sometime in the 1930s earned Millville the designation, "The Holly City."

Caption source: www.co.cumberland.nj.us
What happened to holly orcharding? The same as everything else in the Northeast. The industry is located in Oregon now.
Either plant it like an orchard or…

incorporate woody cuts into your landscape. Many suitable species are found in landscapes, hedgerows, and foundation plantings.
Design your planting.
Planting density pros and cons. I based my planting on current high density fruit orchard designs.
High Density Planting

- Many plants, each one small, less time to first harvest
- You buy more liners (plug to pencil size plants)
- alley hedgerow
- Fabric/plastic with herbicide strips on side
- 3 ft in row 12 ft for drive alley.
Low density planting

- 8 or more ft in row x 15 ft or more between.
- Fewer plants but more years until harvest because you need to let the plants grow bigger.
- Buy fewer but larger plants.
- With time and growth, larger scaffold branches fill the space.
- Mulch circle weed control with herbicide spot treatments.
The “Big 10” products that florists want.
Stem Dogwoods

- Autumn-winter
- Red stem dogwood “stick dogwoods”
- Dieback disease
- Fading of some
- Harvest every year
Red stem dogwood can be cut back to about 1 ft. annually
Winterberry Holly

- Deciduous holly for Holiday use
- Ample soil moisture
- Male and female plants need for berry set
- Selective harvest or alternate year harvest
Evergreen Holly foliage with our without berries

- Limited to Christmas market
- Male needed for berry set to take place.
- Selective harvest
Southern Magnolia

- Evergreen native tree can be used year round as a green, but is especially desirable for holiday use.
- Wreath use.
- Grows fairly rapidly.
- Hard to source liners.
Quince

- Early January harvest and force

- Thorns

- Scale has been a problem.

- Selective harvest or alternate year.
Forsythia

- Can force in late January.

- Change forcing water weekly, use preservative.

- Can cut to 1 ft above ground every year.
Cherry Blossom

- Spring

- Tent caterpillar and deer rub.

- Selective harvest or alternate year harvest.
Willows

- Pussy Willow--spring
- Curly Willow--dry or hold in cooler and use year round.
- Fantail Willow--fall use
- Aphids
- Tolerates moisture
- Harvest every year, clear cut
Pussy willow  Curly Willow
Lilac
*Syringa vulgaris* hybrids

- Late frost caution
- *Pseudomonas syringae*
- Lilac borer
- Scale
- Selective harvest or alternate year harvest
PeeGee “type” Hydrangeas

*Hydrangea paniculata grandiflora* cultivars

- Flowers on new wood.
- Can cut back every year.
- Other hydrangeas possible
Harvest
Orchard Byproducts Possible: some peach, cherry and apples have good blooms but this varies by variety. Look at blossoms before planting.
Pests

- Tent caterpillars on *Prunus*
- Deer on *Malus* and others
- Japanese beetles esp. pussy willow
- Aphids on willows and others
- Scale
  - Info in: The Cut Flower Quarterly, Spring 2012, Stanton Gill
Lilac Problems:
scale, pseudomonas, frost, fall blooming, borer!
Establishment

• Pre-plant soil preparation to meet your organic matter, pH and phosphorus needs.

• Eradicate all perennial weeds and turf grass the year before with a non-selective herbicide or repeated cultivation.

• Planting--March for bare root or container stock. September planting of container grown stock is ideal. Make sure your planting site and irrigation system is prepared before of arrival of the stock.

• Irrigation and weed control is particularly important during the first season of establishment.

• Remember that plant growth is exponential. If you can let these things grow for two or three years you will be rewarded with large plants.
Crop Management

Depending on your site and your yield needs for these crops the opportunity for very low maintenance production is a possibility!


• Mulch for weeds, use fabric or a combination of the above with pre- and post-emergent herbicides with woody ornamentals production on the label. Many options.

• Irrigation--an inch or more per week. I recommend drip lines in-the-row with grass strips between rows.
Floor Management: mulch, fabric, herbicide, plastic, mowing
• Non-selective burndown herbicides don’t harm most woody plants—paraquat and diquat are for experienced pesticide handlers.

• Glyphosate can only be used sparingly with a shielded sprayer under non-windy conditions.

• For preemergent herbicides, I have used Snapshot (granular) Goal, Surflan, Gallery and Pendulum in both liquid and granular forms.

Trusted Plant Suppliers

Small cell-grown and bareroot liners
- Heritage Seedlings, Salem Oregon
- Schaeffer Nursery, Winchester, Tennessee
- Spring Meadow Nursery, Grand Haven, Michigan

Great source of quart and gallon sized liners
- Cumberland Nursery, Millville, New Jersey

Sources of Unusual/Rare Woody Plants
- Rarefind Nursery, Jackson, New Jersey
Informational Resources


• Gill, Stanton et al., *Production of Woody Plants as Cut Flowers*. U. of Maryland, [http://ipmnet.umd.edu/cutflower/cut_pubs.htm](http://ipmnet.umd.edu/cutflower/cut_pubs.htm)
