

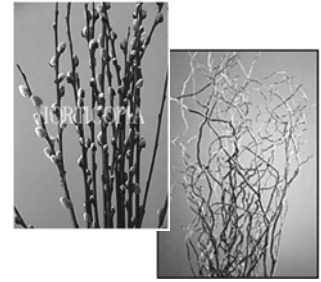


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Third Crop Options

Woody Decorative Florals

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Background:

Opportunity exists to produce and market woody decorative florals in the Midwest. Current production is predominately from Washington, Oregon and California, although some occurs in Wisconsin. Researchers at the University of Nebraska have worked extensively with woody decorative florals and their research indicates that producing woody decorative florals is a viable 3rd Crop enterprise.

Any woody plant with colorful or unusually shaped stems, buds, flowers, fruits, bark, or leaves has potential to be sold as a woody decorative floral. The following are examples of woody plants whose stems or branches are sold in the woody floral market:

- **Dogwoods** (i.e. Bailey, Redtwig, Bloodtwig, Cardinal, Colorado, and Yellowtwig Dogwood)
- **Willows** (i.e. Curly, Flame, French Pussy, Scarlet Curls, and Streamco Willow)
- **Apple, Cherry, Crabapple, Plum, and Witchhazel flowering branches.**
- **Forsythia**
- **Holly**
- **Red Birch**
- **American Bittersweet**

Quality is very important when marketing woody decorative florals, giving locally produced products the edge over materials that are shipped over long distances. Most woody florals are sold fresh to the floral industry although some are sold as dried products.

Uses:

- Fresh Floral Arrangements
- Dried Floral Arrangements
- Wreaths
- Floral Greens
- Seasonal Decorations

Production and Management Considerations:

Woody decorative florals can be planted in mass groupings or strategically on the landscape in places such as windbreaks, living snow fences, and stream-side buffers. Plants are usually spaced 4 to 6 feet apart. Irrigation can help ensure consistent quality but may not be necessary in all situations, especially in areas where moisture is not a limiting factor.

Insects and diseases may be issues in the production of woody ornamentals and weeds should be controlled, especially during early plant establishment.

Stems can generally be harvested after the 2nd or 3rd growing season after planting and every year or two after that, depending on the species. Harvesting is labor intensive and generally occurs in late October through March. Stems should be trimmed, sorted and bunched, and kept in water until shipping or delivery. If possible, stems should also be stored in dark, cool (under 40°F) conditions until shipment or delivery. Delivering a quality product is extremely important with woody decorative florals.

The Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM) at the University of Minnesota and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln have developed more detailed production and management information which will be accessible through CINRAM's website (1).

Profit Potential:

Depending on the species, plantings can gross approximately \$1.70 to \$4.00/lineal foot. Average potential net income per plant ranged from a loss of \$0.87 (Bloodtwig Dogwood) to a gain of \$17.92 (Scarlet Curls Willow) in research conducted by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Supply, demand, production and marketing costs, and quality all influence profits.

The following describes the yields and value of woody florals produced at Mead, NE.

Woody Floral Yields and Value at Mead, Nebraska:

Species	1 st Harvest (#) *	2 nd Harvest (#) **	Stems Per 1000 ft (#)	Wholesale Value Per 1000 ft (\$)
Streamco Willow	14	38	6,335	2,860
Scarlet Curly Willow	22	53	8,835	4,156
Pussy Willow	13	43	7,168	1,086
Corkscrew Willow	0	14	3,500	1,220
Bailey Dogwood	6	9	2,250	693
Colorado Dogwood	8	9	2,250	713
Flame Willow	0	10	2,500	715
Cardinal Dogwood	9	8	2,000	578
Yellowtwig Dogwood	2	4	1,000	460
Bloodtwig Dogwood	2	2	500	158

* 2 year's growth after planting, ** 1 year's growth after harvest
 NOTE: Spacing = 4 to 6 ft depending on species. Prices based on actual sales in Lincoln/Omaha area from 12/01-3/02.
 SOURCE: University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Scott J. Josiah, et. al.

Market Opportunities, Development, and Challenges:

Potential markets for woody decorative florals include:

- Retail Florists
- Wholesale Floral Suppliers (local or regional)
- Large Supermarket Chains with floral shops
- Nurseries/gift shops
- Direct to the Consumer (i.e. via farmer's markets, the internet, festivals, trade shows, and fairs)
- Floral design instructors and programs
- Handicraft and hobby stores (dried woody florals)

Producers in the Midwest would likely be unable to compete in West Coast markets with producers there primarily due to transportation costs and the proximity of West Coast producers to the area. Excluding the West Coast market for these reasons, the woody floral industry is estimated to be approximately \$7.6 million (University of Nebraska-Lincoln). The total U.S. and Canadian market is likely much larger since this estimate does not include dried products, products produced by florists, products ordered directly from larger producers, or Canadian markets.

Locally produced woody decorative florals have the advantage of being fresher and of higher quality than goods shipped over long distances. Quality issues such as dead tips and dried, broken, inflexible, or poorly colored stems should be reduced with locally produced products. Local producers can also potentially offer a wider variety of products, such as tall or long stems, since damage potential should be reduced with decreased shipping distances.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln research indicates demand for woody decorative florals currently exceeds supply due to seasonal variability. Depending on the species, markets can be year round (i.e. Curly willows) or seasonal (i.e. holly during the holidays or pussy willow during the spring). Curly willow was noted to be in particular demand, especially curly willow tips. It was also noted that hobby chains would like to offer a wider variety of dried florals but the possibility of shipping damage and high costs from West Coast suppliers was a hindrance.

Being a "niche" market, woody decorative florals require greater marketing efforts than other more traditional crops. Establishing markets before initiating production is highly recommended.

References and Resources:

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