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Forsythia – (Forsythia X Intermedia)

This is one of the top 10 woodies for growers. This easy to grow shrub is harvested both for its flowers and foliage. Because it is so popular, new growers should focus on local sales rather than the wholesale market. Before buying planting stock, new growers should research the newer variegated cultivars, as this is an area of growing demand.



Lynnwood, or Lynwood Gold, is a popular cultivar that produces up to 100 stems per plant. Spring Glory is also a strong producer, and blooms about a week earlier than Lynnwood. Both produce an abundance of yellow flowers on each stem. Growers interested in selling forsythia foliage stems should explore the Fiesta, Goldleaf and Kumson variegated cultivars.

Growing Tips:

- Grows in Zones 5-8.
- Prefers full sun and tolerates most soils.
- Space new plants 4 feet apart.
- Easy to grow and disease free.

Harvesting Tips:

- Cut stems close to ground, as this encourages vigorous new growth.
- Harvest in tight bud stage.
- Stems may be harvested early and held for spring sale by freezing to 29 degrees F.
- Foliage stems are cut in late summer or fall when leaves have hardened off. Test by putting a stem in water. If the leaves wilt, you've harvested too soon.

Marketing Tips:

- Blooming foliage stems sell well at farmer's markets.
- Sell in bunches by length. Under 2 feet – 20 stems per bunch, 2-5 feet – 10 stems per bunch, over 5 feet – 5 stems per bunch.

Rose Hips (Rosa)

After the flower petals have fallen off the rose, the rose hip – the fruit of the plant – remains, and is a sought-after splash of fall color for floral designers and decorators. Woody ornamental growers like rose hips because they generate sales and income during the slow fall season. Buyers like them because the vase life is much longer than most flowers – as long as three weeks.



Growers should choose rose species that produce the best hips, such as *Rosa macrophylla*. Two of the top cultivars are Doncasteri, which produces long bright red hips and Master Hugh, which produces monster hips. Another favorite rose species for hip production is *Rosa rugosa*, also called the sea tomato. The hips resemble cherry tomatoes, and the stems can be harvested all summer and into the fall in most areas, and sold fresh or dried.

Growing Tips:

- Hardy in Zones 4-9.
- Needs well-drained soil and good air circulation.
- Prefers full sun.
- Long-lived plants can produce for 20 years.
- Space new plants 2-3 feet apart.
- Needs two years to mature before harvesting.

Harvesting Tips:

- Hips can be harvested fully colored or while still green.
- Average yield is 20 stems per plant.
- Buyers prefer no leaves, which can be removed by hand or sweating 2 days in plastic.

Marketing Tips:

- Vase life is 2-3 weeks.
- Stems commonly sold in bunches of 10, sorted by length.
- Rose hips can be made into a variety of value-added products, such as jams, jellies, cosmetics and teas.

Curly Willow & Stem Willow

Florists, decorators and wedding planners all love the contorted, twisted shape of curly willow, which is why this plant is such a consistent money-maker for so many woody ornamental growers. Add the ease of growing, the long selling season extending all winter long, the robust production, and you've got a woody winner!

The two best species for curly stem production are Snake willow – *Salix alba* – and Corkscrew willow – *Salix matsudana*. Snake willow is much hardier, and can be grown in Zones 2 to 8, while Corkscrew willow is hardy in Zones 5 to 7.

Colored willow stems are in demand from florists and crafters who use the stems for basket weaving and other fiber arts, such as wreaths. One basket weaver/grower has cultivated a unique niche, growing a rainbow of colored willow stems for other basket weavers, and offering willow cuttings for those who grow their own. You'll find a link in the resource section to learn more.

Three of the most widely grown willow species for colored stems are *Salix alba*, *Salix purpurea*, and *Salix x rubens*. The best cultivars for *Salix alba* are *Britzensis*, with orange-red stems, *Cardinalis*, with vivid red stems and *Vitellina*, with bright yellow stems. *Salix purpurea* has dozens of cultivars, many developed in Britain, with its long history of basketry, with stem colors ranging from green to red. *Salix rubens* has several cultivars, with lovely stems of yellow, orange and red, such as *Basfordiana*, *Farndon* and *Golden*.

