

2001 Cut Flowers of the Year



Helianthus annuus “Sunbright”

The ASCFG Fresh Cut Flower of the Year for 2001 is *Helianthus annuus* “Sunbright”. “Sunbright” is a pollenless sunflower variety that grows three to six feet tall with rounded, golden yellow petals and brown center florets. “Sunbright” flowers early on strong stems and is excellent for both field and greenhouse production. Direct sowing is recommended; however, transplants can be used to shorten production time in the field. While a final spacing of four by five inches is ideal, spacing can vary depending on the size of the flower head and branching desired. Dense spacing will yield a flower size of five inches and reduce side branching, while wide plant spacing will increase flower size. Excessive nitrogen, especially in summer, will cause plants to grow too vigorously with abnormal flower shapes.

Flowering time will be about 60 days in the summer in the field. Greenhouse production time ranges from 8 to 10 weeks, depending on temperature. During natural short days of winter, plants will flower more quickly with smaller discs on shorter stems. Cut stems when the flowers are one quarter open with the petals perpendicular to the center disc. Late harvesting will result in reduced vase life. Flowers will last 7 to 14 days; especially if the stems are re-cut and the water is changed regularly.

Artemisia ludoviciana “Silver King”

The ASCFG Dried Cut Flower of the Year 2001 is *Artemisia ludoviciana* “Silver King”. Allan Armitage calls this the best *Artemisia* cultivar, noting its excellent deep silver foliage and red fall color. *Artemisia* is a popular filler flower valued for its great color retention and pliability after drying. The foliage is aromatic and as with all fragrances, some people like it and some do not. Plants grow up to three feet tall and spread to about three feet, and are heat and drought tolerant. The plants are cold hardy in Zones 4 to 9 with a heat zone rating of Zone 12 to 3. Fungal disease problems can occur in some areas of the country. Plants are propagated by division or softwood cuttings and cut stems can be harvested the second year after planting. Cut stems after the flowers have just begun to open. Harvesting too soon will cause droopy tips after drying.

