

EVALUATION OF SUITABLE VARIETIES OF GERBERA (*Gerbera jamesonii*) FOR CUT FLOWER PRODUCTION UNDER THE MID-COUNTRY CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

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Gerbera is one of the newly introduced cut flower types in Sri Lanka. Gerbera varieties available in the markets show a broad range of quality differences. These differences are mainly due to growing environment. Thus it is important to evaluate gerbera varieties to select suitable varieties to mid country climatic conditions for production of high quality cut flowers.

Eight varieties of *Gerbera jamesonii* imported from India (Avant Garde, Dana Ellen, Sazou, Picobello, Ellymay, Amulet, Junkfrau and Quote) were evaluated under mid country climatic conditions. Completely Randomized Design was used as experimental design. Survival rate, number of leaves per plant, number of days to first bud initiation and first harvest, diameter of flower and their shapes and length of flower stalk and quality of stalk, vase life, productivity and number of plants and flowers affected by pests and diseases were recorded.

Survival rates of *Gerbera* of all varieties were high under mid-country climatic conditions. High vegetative growth was recorded in the variety Quote and 75% of plants formed suckers. They formed an average number of leaves of 27.83. Flowering was the earliest in Ellymay (83.5 days) and the latest in Quote (150.73 days). The greatest diameter of flower was observed in Amulet, Ellymay and Dana Ellen (9.415, 9.39 and 9.11cm, respectively). Length of flower stalk was high in Amulet, Dana Ellen

and Ellymay (52.76, 52.62 and 52.48 cm respectively). Higher percentage of straight flower stalk was produced by Dana Ellen, Ellymay, Amulet and Sazou (96%, 90.67%, 90.4%. and 90.2%, respectively). The number of plants produced round shape flowers was high in Junkfrau, Avent Garde, Sazou, Dana Ellen, Ellymay, Qoute and Amulet (95%, 97.5%, 92.7%, 92.6%, 92%, 91.3% and 90.4% respectively). The greatest vase life was recorded in Dana Ellen (10 days). Productivity was highest in Ellymay. Based on the overall performances, Ellymay, Dana Ellen and Amulet varieties are suitable for cut flower production under Mid-Country climatic conditions in Sri Lanka.

Key words: *Gerbera jamesonii*, Mid country, Cut flower.