



HighLights



Trial Gardens and HortResearch at the South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station

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QUESTION: Why must a high tunnel be so **high**? ANSWER: To make room for the **GIANTS**.

Dr. Gary Bachman and Dr. Jim DelPrince have been investigating the production of zinnias in high tunnels for season extension of this crop for commercial cut flower growers. High tunnels are unheated greenhouses (with only natural heating and ventilation) in which horticultural crops are grown in the ground, allowing growers to produce an earlier spring crop and a later fall crop than would be possible in an open field.

We currently have a spring crop of all twelve separate colors of 'Benary's Giant' zinnias that are in full flower in a high tunnel (with the sides of the high tunnel opened to permit ventilation) at the Poplarville station (photo below). The 'Benary's Giant' zinnias are being harvested for a new Extension program in floral design. Last fall, a crop of mixed colors of 'Giant Dahlia Flowered' zinnias was planted in the high tunnel from 72-cell plug trays on August 23, and the harvest of cut flowers ran from the last week of September through the first week of December.

Gary Bachman comments, "The demand for locally grown food has been expanding to include specialty cut flowers. This is especially true for growing in a high tunnel during the shoulder seasons of early spring and late fall. *Zinnia elegans* is a good candidate for local growers. Last fall, the total number of salable zinnia stems harvested from 80 linear feet of row totaled 5,289 over the 10-week harvest period."



Zinnia 'Benary's Giant' (separate colors)