

Strategies for Holding and Delaying Crops

Ball Technical Services

Holding strategies are dependent on the time of year and market conditions. Each grower needs to evaluate how long the crop should be delayed and how best to manage the crop using the techniques listed in supplementary Excel tool.

There are several different strategies a grower can use to slow the rate of development to better time a crop for a delayed market period. The three strategies we suggest can be additive, so it is best to only use one of the strategies at a time!

- **Temperature.** The most common method is to use low night temperatures to slow growth. Growers should keep the day temperature as close as possible to the night temperature and no more than 10F. Keep in mind some crops are damaged by excessively low temperatures. The Excel tool recommends lowest temperatures.
- **PGR.** When crops are at 90+% of the maximum acceptable height, then apply PGRs to stop stretch. Consult the GrowerTalks PGR editions (www.growertalks.com/SpecialEditions/) for other options and rates. Many times, the PGR effect is increased by low temperatures, so use the low rate when in doubt.
- **Cut Back.** When the plants are beginning to outgrow the container, the only solution may be to cut back the crop. If a crop needs to be cut back, the Excel tool provides the approximate weeks needed to rebloom the plants. The estimated cutback crop time assumes a slight cut back. If a hard cutback is used, then additional weeks would be required. Note that some crops are “DON’T” cutback since these plants will either not rebloom or regrow in a timely basis.

Be sure to watch or listen to Holding and Delaying Crops: A panel discussion with Ball Technical Service Experts, for even more detail and real-world strategies to keep annual and perennial crops saleable longer.