



Spring  
Meadow™

# FIVE WAYS TO AVOID PLANT SHORTAGES IN 2021

Since our industry's record-breaking season in 2020, sales of starter plants of all types, from annuals to perennials to shrubs, point to extremely high demand in the years ahead as well. By all reports, many suppliers are already sold out, or nearly so. While there's a certain satisfaction to being sold out, it also means that money is being left on the table. To maximize your profits during this unique time, you may have to get a little creative with your product mix and growing practices. Here are five simple strategies to avoid product shortages and to maximize profitability in this new, home-centered market.

## 1. Order early

Okay, this seems pretty obvious, and it may be too late to put this into effect. But it's still a good lesson for the future: if you're seeing rapid sell-through, so is everyone else, and you'll need to act quickly and accordingly with your suppliers. At Spring Meadow, we planned for a 50% increase in demand for our shrub liners based on 2020 sales, and our propagation and growing teams stepped up to make it happen. We may very well have the plants you need in our greenhouses right now – but even if we don't, not to fear. It's not too early (or too late) to reserve liners for next year, particularly for high-demand items like our pre-budded hydrangeas.

## 2. Diversify crop types/times

We're a spring-centric industry, especially when it comes to flowering shrubs and evergreens. But that's changing, as savvy new customers seek out less crowded periods at the garden center, and as container-grown plants make the more traditionally finicky B&B obsolete. It's the perfect time to bring in new crops that you can sell beyond the main season: hydrangeas, rose of Sharon, and butterfly bush are all easy add-ons for growers of herbaceous material, and ensure you have something beautiful and blooming to ship to your customers. Shortages at the starter plant level may mean that you can't source the same varieties or types of crops you've always grown, so branching out into new plant types may be necessary to keep a steady supply of fresh product. That can be scary, but the Proven Winners ColorChoice brand offers two significant advantages that make it less so: professional growing sheets for all 320+ varieties, and the strongest, most strategic marketing in the business. We reach out to retailers, landscapers, and consumers online, on radio, and in print, with the sole goal of making sure wholesale growers like you sell through.

## 3. Grow fast-turning varieties

Woody plants have a reputation for slowness, but that's far from the case for all of them. Over 75 of the Proven Winners ColorChoice Shrubs varieties can go from a one-quart Quick Turn liner to a finished two gallon – or 4" liner to a finished one gallon – in just 10 weeks. Ask your account manager about the Spring Meadow Quick Flip program for suggestions and availability.

Another option to consider, while there's still time: bare root roses. Available for all Proven Winners rose varieties, these heavy, robust plants are grown and shipped from Certified Roses in Arizona and can be quickly potted up and grown in a cool greenhouse to flush out in time for spring. If you've got a little space and a few extra hands around the nursery now, there's no faster or more affordable way to increase your offerings and availability.

## 4. Plan ahead for the future

Some of the most popular shrub varieties, like boxwood, rhododendron, and barberry, need a little extra time to fill out a container. That makes them high value at market, but it also requires a little foresight to make sure you never run out of these always-in-demand species. Look at your production plans not just for the season ahead, but multiple seasons ahead, so that when your phone starts ringing for these landscape classics, you're racking up orders, not delays.

## 5. Take a growth-oriented mindset

Fortune favors the bold, they say, and that's just as true in the nursery industry as it is in the stock market. So often, when we're presented with growth opportunities like we're seeing now, it's tempting to order a little more, ignoring the income potential you could have by growing in proportion with the actual market. In the 2021-2022 season, that would look more like a 50% increase in sales than the 10-15% the average grower is planning for. While this might meet the demands of your existing customers, it leaves you with no growth potential – and no plants to sell to hungry landscapers and retailers who are looking for new sources from less savvy growers. You can't sell plants you don't have, so plan boldly, grow boldly, and sell boldly. You will be rewarded.

The Spring Meadow team welcomes the opportunity to be your partners in profitability, combining our experience and expertise with yours to bring beautiful, high-quality finished shrubs to market. [Contact the account manager for your state or province today to get started!](#)

