

Flowers bring happiness, fortune

Farmers enjoy thriving floral business in Beijing suburb

By YU NAN
China Daily staff

With short grey hair, a swarthy face without wrinkles and a hale and hearty body, Liu Huanyao's looks belie his 60 years.

"If someone spends most of his time with flowers, it's very hard to get old," Liu says, looking at his 0.4 hectare flower nursery with satisfaction.

His daughter-in-law, Wang Xiuyu, is busy watering dozens of potted chrysanthemum, which are all expected to be sold within 15 days.

His oldest son, Liu Delu, who took charge of the nursery after Liu retired three years ago, is out trying to attract new clients.

Having cultivated flowers for more than 40 years, Liu is famous for producing high-quality flowers and developing numerous new flower varieties in Beijing's Huaxiang (Flower Town).

"I had to retire. Otherwise my son would never feel pressured to learn my skills," Liu said.

Despite the shift, Liu still spends a lot of his time at various flower markets in Beijing.

City's 'back garden'

Located in the Fengtai District in the southwestern part of Beijing, and with a near 700-year association with flowers that started during the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368), Huaxiang has often been called the "back garden of Beijing."

Only six miles from downtown Beijing, with flat land and plentiful water resources, the area is traditionally the main flower supplier for the capital. About 50 per cent of potted flowers and 30 per cent of cut flowers sold in Beijing are grown in Huaxiang, according to Cui Zepei, an official from the township government.

Liu is one of the nearly 2,000 local farmers who still make a living planting and selling flowers and he is re-

garded as one of the most successful. "I sell more than 10,000 yuan worth of flowers raised in my nursery during the week-long National Day holidays alone," Liu said.

Hi-tech production

Liu's father and grandfather were farmers and he seemed destined to follow in their footsteps. He began planting flowers in 1961 and was able to open his own nursery in 1987, eight years after China started reforms and opened up to the outside world. At that time he had planted 0.4 hectare in

total, but he has since expanded to 400 varieties of flower. "You can find orchid, jasmine, mum, rose, lily and almost anything you want here," Liu said. Although Liu says he never thought of a flower business as a profession, he now has a large family of more than 20 people.

"In the 1960s my main concern was to fill my stomach, but now I enjoy modern life with computers, televisions, and of course more flowers," Liu said. He attributes his business success to technical developments in flower cultivation and they planted flower-based on old experiences, "I am lucky compared to them studied in middle school and university."

"Science is useful but if you don't cultivate the best flowers, you can't get the best price. Scientific guidelines to control temperature, fertilization and

water, sunlight and other factors are very important. In Liu's nursery was chosen as the experimental site for several horticultural research institutes in the 1960s and 1970s, which offered many chances to learn from and research with them.

her stroke of good fortune, Liu's nursery was chosen as the experimental site for several horticultural research institutes in the 1960s and 1970s, which offered many chances to learn from and research with them.

Despite success, Liu Huanyao and the staff working at Shengfangyuan are being challenged more and more by competitors and non-standard flower markets.

"Although the overall flower industry is booming, the price of flowers in wholesale markets is not good," Liu Dejun said. The reason for the wholesale price slump, according to managers at the Yuquanying flower wholesale market in Beijing, is that growers in Yunnan and Guangdong, who are still the major suppliers of ready-cut flowers for Beijing in the winter, have harvested huge quantities.

The flower supply excess, combined with intense competition among wholesalers, has driven prices way down.

In Beijing alone there are more than 10 flower wholesale markets, which, according to Liu Dejun, is too many for the capital.

He said lower-quality flowers pouring into market had also driven the price down. "Ordinary buyers sometimes only know the names of the flowers but cannot tell the real quality of them, so they are likely to buy the cheaper ones," he said. "The higher-quality flowers with a higher and proper price are in trouble."

"I combined my old experiences with new science and technology and the results were gratifying," he said. "Science also helps me keep doing innovative experiments on flower varieties, allowing me to maintain a technical advantage."

The driving force of science within flower production is more obvious at the largest cultivation company in Huaxiang, the pioneering Shengfangyuan Flower Cultivation Base.

The company was founded in 1997 with money from the local government. Covering almost 24 hectares with two modern-equipped greenhouses and a dozen standard greenhouses, the base plants 3 million flowers for cutting and 300,000 flowers for potting each year.

Most of the flower sprouts and seeds are imported from Taiwan and Holland, in an effort to help create new species to win a bigger market share.

"In the two modern-equipped greenhouses, we mainly cultivate cyclamen, butterfly orchids and anthuriumandraenum, and computers control everything," base manager Liu Dejun said.

Liu Dejun said the company is exporting most of the cut chrysanthemum and anthuriumandraenum to Japan and South Korea.

With its computerized facilities, he said the company only needs about 120 people to take care of the operation: 80 per cent of them are former local flower farmers and the remainder are technical college graduates.

Challenges

Despite success, Liu Huanyao and the staff working at Shengfangyuan are being challenged more and more by competitors and non-standard flower markets.

"Although the overall flower industry is booming, the price of flowers in wholesale markets is not good," Liu Dejun said. The reason for the wholesale price slump, according to managers at the Yuquanying flower wholesale market in Beijing, is that growers in Yunnan and Guangdong, who are still the major suppliers of ready-cut flowers for Beijing in the winter, have harvested huge quantities.

The flower supply excess, combined with intense competition among wholesalers, has driven prices way down.

In Beijing alone there are more than 10 flower wholesale markets, which, according to Liu Dejun, is too many for the capital.

He said lower-quality flowers pouring into market had also driven the price down. "Ordinary buyers sometimes only know the names of the flowers but cannot tell the real quality of them, so they are likely to buy the cheaper ones," he said. "The higher-quality flowers with a higher and proper price are in trouble."



WU JIACHUN/China Daily

Flower farmers: Li Wubin and his wife are busy with their nursery in Dounan in the suburbs of Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan Province.

Dounan, world of blossoms

By WU JIACHUN
China Daily staff

KUNMING: While your lover may be pleased by a small bunch of roses, farmers from Dounan village weigh their sales by the ton.

Airlines and railways are kept busy throughout the year transporting delicate China pinks, graceful lilies, colourful orchids and numerous other popular varieties around the country to meet demand.

During the drab winters in some Chinese cities, one in every three flowers on display stands are from the small village in the suburbs of Kunming, capital of Southwest China's Yunnan Province.

As flowers bring colour to city life, they also bring happiness to Dounan's residents. "Our ancestors planted rice and vegetables and struggled to make ends meet. We are now making a fortune by planting flowers," said Li Wubin, a local farmer.

Li said the villagers started cultivating flowers in 1983 after trying some China pink seeds from Shanghai.

The rich soil and mild climate of Yunnan turned them into dazzling beauties, and the rest is history.

The villagers were amazed to find out that by selling flowers they could earn three times as much as they could selling vegetables. In a few years, their annual income reached an average of 50,000 yuan (US\$6,024).

Li, 48, was able to have a three-storey house built.

Although enjoying the good fortune brought by the flowers, the farmers are concerned about the future of the industry. "The soil has deteriorated due to the excessive amount of chemicals applied," Li said.

He said it was too costly for a single farmer to improve the soil quality, as the land in the village has been divided among more than 1,600 households.

Li plans to rent land in a neighbouring village and use it for planting.



Above: Hundreds of chrysanthemums flourish in the greenhouse of the Shengfangyuan Flower Cultivation Base in Beijing's Huaxiang. Right: Liu Huanyao is renowned in Huaxiang for nurturing high-quality flower varieties.

Photos by YU NAN/China Daily



CROSSWORD (No 6724)

CROSSWORD grid with clues. ACROSS: 1 Knocks sharply, 5 Luxury car, 8 Comfy, 12 Shampoo additive, 13 Recline, 14 Fringe, 15 Sparkles, 17 Rough file, 18 Senorita's aunt, 19 Nasty shocks, 20 Sitar kin, 23 Vibrate, 26 Ex-superspower, 27 One, for Pierre, 28 TD passers, 31 Large parrot, 32 Impatient, 34 Dead heat, 35 Miscalculate, 36 Insect resin, 37 Polygraph flunker, 38 Power, 40 Church alcove, 41 Feedback, 44 With-it. DOWN: 46 Put, 47 Most speedy, 52 Sympathetic, 53 Leia's rescuer, 54 Sandwich cookie, 55 Kill, as a dragon, 56 It may be hard-boiled, 57 Tempo.

Solution to No 6723. A crossword puzzle solution grid with words filled in. Words include: DOS, BETA, PHDS, RAH, APED, ABUG, ETE, WARMFRONT, WHEEL, RIME, ND, MOT, NAPA, BOA, PER, UTURN, YD, CAT, GPS, OK, RIVAL, PAC, CPA, DEAR, DAB, SR, EWER, AMUSE, HONEYCOMB, SOS, WREN, ALEE, OFA, YEAS, LEWD, EAU.

TODAY'S TELEVISION

CCTV-1 Channel 2 11:20 Half of the Sky 12:40 Law Report 16:23 Review of the Century 19:00 News; weather 19:38 Focus Interview 21:05 Serial: Soldier's Wedding (2) 22:00 World Report	CCTV-2 Channel 8 10:30 Road to Health 17:05 China Market Update 19:30 China Business Report 20:00 Life 20:40 Net Age 21:35 Economy 30 Minutes 22:15 Stock Market Today	CCTV-4 Channel 32 11:30 Around China 16:10 Oriental Horizon 18:30 Across the Straits 20:05 China Showbiz 21:30 China Report 22:10 Sports online	CCTV-6 Channel 18 12:27 Serial: Jiang (5, 6) 18:11 Anin Theatre 18:21 Peo movie: Zhan 19:45 Chir Tian 21:49 Film ket 22:11 US r	CCTV-8 Channel 29 11:05 Anin /orld 19:00 Arol ne Theatre: Auto 20:00 Prim City 19 21:48 Jiayi ma Theatre	CCTV-9 19:00 Worl ide Watch 20:00 Cultu xpress 23:00 Spo cene	BTV-1 Channel 6 11:30 Beiji xpress 17:25 Stoc date	18:30 News; weather 19:42 Documentary 19:53 20-part serial: Story of 2001 (1) 22:36 Hello the World BTV-2 Channel 21 12:05 21-part serial: The Family (1) 13:08 Current Popularity 15:46 MTV 18:20 Chinese Top Music 19:38 Serial: Flowing to the Ocean (5, 6) 22:46 Showbiz BTV-4 Channel 17 11:13 Movie Saloon 18:00 630 Theatre: Forty-something Men (48) 19:10 Entertainment Live 19:45 Serial: Shanghai Story (23, 24) 21:34 Serial: Silent Promise (19, 20)
--	--	--	--	---	---	---	---

BRIDGE (By Phillip Alde)

Yesterday, I explained that in a team event, one can theoretically lose only 25 international match points (imps) on a single deal. Then I showed board 13 from the Switzerland-Egypt match in the 1961 European Championship. On it, Switzerland gained 17 imps. However, in the Open Room there had been an insufficient bid and a strange ruling by a director, so the tournament committee threw out the deal and required a substitute board to be played — this one.

After the Egyptian South opened four hearts, the Swiss West made a strange takeout double. East, who didn't fancy reaching five of a minor, passed. (If East had bid four no-trump to show his minor two-suiter, West would have converted to five clubs, a contract that can be made.)

West led the spade ace, cashed the diamond ace, and continued with a low club. East tal his ace. East ner with five queen, return mond. Decla and claimed 37. At the oth West overca spades, whic led the spa and exited v dummy's q shifted to th clarer won, r rounds of sp to dummy's declarer con spade, one l Egypt score of 18 imp. Switzerland indirectly winning 17, then conceding 18.

North: ♠ J 10 9 8, ♥ 9 8 7, ♦ K 4 2, ♣ K Q 4. South: ♠ 2, ♥ A K J 10 5 4 3, ♦ Q J 9 8, ♣ 2. Dealer: South. Vulnerable: Both. Opening lead: ♠ A.

WHAT'S ON

Acrobatic Show
Chaoyang Theatre is a theatre which specializes in acrobatics all the year round. Many top acrobatic artists from all over the country are invited to perform for the Chinese and foreign tourists.
Venue: Chaoyang Theatre, 36 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Time: 7:15 pm, nightly Telephone: 6507-2421, 6507-1818

China National Acrobatic Circus
China National Acrobatic Circus was the first State-level acrobatic troupe of New China and has won lots of gold medals in various well-known international acrobatic contests in places such as Monaco, France, Hungary, Russia and Italy. Now the star-studded cast are exhibiting the charm and elegance of the most professional comprehensive acrobatic art every night. Integrating superlative juggling, unicycling, balancing and jumping through the hoops with the finest ancient Chinese dancing, the award-winning variety show will amaze you at every turn.
Time/Dates: 19:15 - 20:30, every evening
Location: Universe Theatre, 19 Dongzhimen Nanlu, Dongcheng District (100 metres north of Poly Plaza)
Tel: 6502 3984, 6502 2649, 6416 9893 Fax: 6500 2743

Kung Fu Show
The 90-minute performance displays dazzling skills of mysterious Chinese kung fu in a hero-plus-beauty story. Fifty kung fu masters amaze the audience with bare-handed practice, one-to-one competing and weapons practice.
Time/Dates: 19:30, nightly
Venue: Xin Rong Theatre (16 Baizhifang Road, Xuanwu District)
Presented by Beijing Detian Shunyi Culture Development Co., Ltd.
Tel: 8354-0774, 8354-0775

STAGE
Kunqu magic: The Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre is to stage plays of Kunqu Opera to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the theatre.
Kunqu was proclaimed as "a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" last May by UNESCO.
Time: 7:30 pm until October 24
Place: Chang'an Grand Theatre, 7, Jianguomennei Dajie
Tel: 6510-1309, 63522110

EXHIBITION
Art show: The Wanfung Art Gallery is holding two art exhibitions. The western hall of the gallery is hosting a joint art exhibition of Chinese landscape paintings, which runs until October 30.
On show are around 30 works created by five veteran Chinese painters, namely Du Yingqiang, Feng Linzhang, Feng Yiming, Song Di and Zhao Wuchao.
The exhibition in the eastern hall of the gallery displays 47 works by 10 prominent Finnish artists. It will run until October 25.
Time: 9 am-5 pm
Place: 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing
Tel: 6523-3320