

Blooming Business: Exploring Floriculture Opportunities in Northeast India

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The North East region of India, comprising the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, is renowned for its rich biodiversity, vibrant culture and breathtaking landscapes. Amidst its natural treasures, the region also holds a significant place in the world of floriculture. The commercial flower industry in North East India has experienced significant growth and recognition in recent years. The Government of India has acknowledged the importance of floriculture as a sunrise industry and has given it 100% export-oriented status. Some of the key factors contributing to the growth of commercial floriculture in this region are:

1. **Climatic Diversity:** The northeastern states have a varied climate, ranging from subtropical to temperate conditions, which allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of flowers that might not thrive in other parts of India.
2. **Rich Biodiversity:** The region is blessed with diverse flora and fauna, providing a natural habitat for many flowering plant species. This natural diversity can be utilized for both domestic and international flower markets.
3. **Unique Floral Varieties:** The northeastern region is home to several unique and exotic flower species that are in demand in the global market. Orchids, anthuriums, lilies, and rhododendrons are among the flowers that can be cultivated for commercial purposes.
4. **Increasing Demand:** With changing consumer preferences and a growing interest

in ornamental plants and flowers, there is an increasing demand for high-quality, exotic, and unique flowers in the domestic and international markets.

5. **Export Potential:** The northeastern states, due to their proximity to countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Southeast Asian nations, have the potential to become flower-exporting hubs.
6. **Government Support:** Various governmental agencies and departments are recognizing the potential of floriculture in the region and providing support through subsidies, training programs, and infrastructure development.
7. **Tourism:** The natural beauty of the region, combined with its exotic flora, can also attract tourists interested in exploring gardens and flower farms.
8. **Employment Opportunities:** Commercial floriculture can generate employment opportunities for the local population, especially in rural areas, contributing to economic development.

Diversity in Floral Wealth

The North East region of India boasts a diverse range of climatic conditions due to its hilly terrain, varied altitudes, and distinct seasons. This diversity has paved the way for a rich variety of flora to flourish, including many exotic and indigenous flowers. Some of the most prominent commercial flowers cultivated in this region include orchids, anthuriums, lilies, gladiolus, and roses.

1. **Orchids:** The North East is often referred to as the "Orchid Paradise of India." With its unique climatic conditions and rich biodiversity, the region is home to a staggering variety of orchid species. Many of these species are sought after in the global floral trade for their intricate beauty and rarity.
2. **Anthuriums:** These vibrant and heart-shaped flowers are widely cultivated in the Northeast for their striking appearance and long vase life. They thrive in the region's humid and subtropical climate, making them a popular choice among local farmers.
3. **Lilies:** The cool and moist climate of the North East provides an ideal environment for the cultivation of lilies. These elegant flowers come in various colours and sizes, making them a staple in floral arrangements.
4. **Gladiolus:** Known for their tall spikes of vibrant flowers, gladiolus blooms are cultivated in the region for both local consumption and export. Their range of colours and ease of cultivation contribute to their commercial value.
5. **Roses:** While roses are cultivated in various parts of India, the North East's unique climate allows for the production of high-quality roses with distinct characteristics. These roses are in demand for both domestic consumption and export purposes.

Challenges Faced

While the commercial flower industry in North East India shows immense promise, it also faces several challenges that need to be addressed to ensure its sustained growth and development.

1. **Infrastructure and Transportation:** The North East region's remote geographical location poses challenges in terms of transportation and logistics. The lack of efficient infrastructure and connectivity can lead to delays in getting the flowers to market, affecting their quality and shelf life.
2. **Market Access:** While the demand for North East Indian flowers exists in international markets, accessing these markets and establishing a strong global presence requires overcoming trade barriers, quality standards compliance, and establishing reliable distribution networks.
3. **Research and Development:** To compete in the global floral market, continuous research and development are essential. This includes developing new varieties of flowers, improving cultivation techniques, and ensuring pest and disease management.
4. **Climate Variability:** Climate change and unpredictable weather patterns can affect flower cultivation. Sudden temperature fluctuations, excessive rainfall, or drought can impact the quality and quantity of flower production.
5. **Awareness and Promotion:** Creating awareness about the potential of floriculture and promoting these products in national and international markets is crucial for establishing a market presence.

Future Prospects

Despite the challenges, the commercial flower industry in North East India holds a promising future. Governments at both the state and central levels are recognizing the potential of this industry and are taking steps to support its growth.

Initiatives such as providing financial assistance, improving infrastructure, and facilitating market linkages are being implemented to bolster the sector. The region's unique floral biodiversity also offers untapped opportunities. Conservation efforts combined with sustainable harvesting practices can lead to the discovery of new species and varieties that could capture the attention of the global floral market. Moreover, technological advancements can play a pivotal role in overcoming challenges related to transportation and market access. E-commerce platforms can provide a direct link between local farmers and international consumers, eliminating the need for intermediaries and streamlining the supply chain.

Conclusion

Commercial floriculture in Northeast India holds great promise due to its unique climatic conditions, rich biodiversity, and demand for exotic flowers. With proper support, infrastructure, and technical guidance, the region can establish itself as a significant player in the floriculture industry, contributing to the economic development of the northeastern states. The floriculture industry can not only enhance the region's economic growth but also showcase the floral splendour of the North East to the whole world.

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