



Workers place dry rose bush roots into pots

Photographed by ART EMANUEL



A view of one of the many greenhouses at Bordine's

A gardener's mecca

By ERSPEITH BEIER

Although Celts want to go back to Ireland and Moslems want to go to Mecca, gardeners want to go to Bordine's before the seasons pass.

The Bordine's Better Blooms nursery in Rochester may not hold a spiritual significance, but gardeners have been religiously returning to the nursery and florist shop for 35 years.

The company is now in the process of doubling greenhouses, parking lots and will eventually enlarge the entire layout.

Nursery manager Bob Theisen said on a busy spring weekend several thousand gardeners will wander around the 28-acre area, picking out trees, shrubs, plants, vines, ground-cover or ordinary fertilizer to be delivered or hand-carried home.

MARIAN BORDINE, wife of founder and president Darrel Bordine said, "Our biggest change over the past three years is greater emphasis on anything that produces food crops."

"Fruit trees, vegetable plants, berry bushes and our newest development of wine grapes, have shown a 40 percent increase by this year," Mrs. Bordine explained.

Her son, Bruce Bordine, is the general manager of the operation.

When one wanders through the 90,000 square feet of greenhouses and watches skilled workers (some of them Michigan State horticultural placement trainees) transplant and set out thousands of fragile seedlings, there is a clue to how Bordine's works.

The Bordines, as well as Theisen, travel all over the country on what they call "field trials."

THE SPECIALISTS said, "We crawl around on our hands and knees, measuring, smelling, bending, looking and tasting before we ever buy stock."

"I've tasted more tomatoes than an Italian chef ever did," Mrs. Bordine laughingly said.

Another new aspect of the famed company is a division for professional landscape architecture headed by Tony Macha.

This department, only two years old, now has so many bookings it is piled up through May.

The six overall sub-departments of Bordine's have one theme in



Some 65,000 geraniums are at the nursery

common. Everything, the conservatory, flower shop, garden store, has to carry first quality goods.

THE "HORTICULTURAL supermarket" (as Theisen calls it) does not sell to other retailers.

The average shopper for garden stock can mosey through Bordine's in search of a \$150 blue spruce, the now hard-to-get yew, or spot-buy 25 cents worth of seeds, a flat of garlic plants or one of 65,000 geraniums.

The staff advises customers on when to plant, when flowers can go outdoors when they can't and so on.

If you're lucky, they might even show you how they sterilize soil with steam in an old cement mixer or, even more, show you how baby begonias start life in rows of perlite (exploded mica rock).

At any rate Bordine's boasts that they have just about anything that will grow under Michigan's sun and flourish under your green thumb.

