

## **Examining Gerbera cut-flower production at the conditions of the Arava Valley**

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*Gerbera (Gerbera hybrida)* has been traditionally cultivated in Israel in the relatively humid and temperate coastal regions. During many years this crop was avoided in the Arava Valley due to the threats of the water salinity and the high temperatures, and the costly transportation. Following a successful venture in a private farm, a decision has been made to test the feasibility of Gerbera cultivation in Yair station. The examination was conducted during two seasons between 2005-7 in three growth media (soil, volcanic gravel (Touf), and Perlite), in both cooled and open greenhouse conditions, simultaneously. It has been concluded, that the Gerbera cultivation in the Arava has a significant relative advantage, especially during winter time. The yield quality and quantity were good with no heating requirements. *Botrytis cinerea*, which is a major pathogen of Gerbera cultivation in the coastal Plain, did not affect the winter crop in the Arava due to the low relative humidity of the region. Attempts to pass the summer failed, as many plants were affected by various soil diseases. The experimental work will continue the examination of Gerbera cultivation in the soil as well as in other growth media as an annual crop which should be replanted yearly.