GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Ball's New Down-Under Digs

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You're looking at the new home of Ball Australia, located in the town of Skye, about 30 minutes southeast of Melbourne, in Australia's state of Victoria. Employees moved into their new digs in mid-July of last year, but they'd already been shipping plugs and liners since Week 10. Your scribe tagged along with Anna Ball and a few key executives for the December 4 grand opening. In the inset photo, Anna Ball and Managing Director Paul Boland apply the traditional gold scissors to red ribbon.

The old facility, which is about seven miles away as the crow flies, was leased, and too small, and needed upgrades, and the landlord was ready to sell at too high a price. Ball used the opportunity to search for a clean-slate

site that was close to customers (40% of product is picked up), close to employees, and had utilities and water. This 40-acre plot fit the bill perfectly.

The sleek office is definitely Australia modern: vertical timber cladding, geometric shapes, flat roof, big windows and an airy breezeway opening to the trial gardens. Inside, it’s a minimalist, open floor plan. Rear office windows look out into the Van der Hoeven greenhouse, which at 7.9 acres, has 45% more production space than their old site. The 6-meter (19.7-ft.) gutter height, plus plenty of roof venting options and energy curtains, ensure a stable environment for stock plants, plugs and liners. **GT**