

# GROWERTALKS

## Growers Talk Business

12/1/2018

### Let Them Quit

*Art Parkerson*



**ART PARKERSON**

John was different, one of the smartest people I've ever hired. He had something like six degrees in subjects as varied as fine art and sociology. He'd started four businesses of his own, and from what I could tell, was independently wealthy. When I hired him, I asked why in the world he wanted to work for a nursery, making \$15 an hour. He said, "Plants are the next big thing."

Dan was different. He was careful and conscientious ... and maybe even smarter than John. It took him five years to finally accept my job offers. When he started, he told me, "I'm very careful not to begin what I cannot finish, but I always finish."

Dennis was different. His father-in-law was a founding partner of our company. Our payroll records show his start date as September of 1989, but

I know that's wrong. He was here long before that. Most nurserymen will tell you that the single most important person on any nursery is the irrigationist. Dennis was ours. He knew where everything was buried.

Brittany was different. She'd been a stay-at-home mother, but once her kids were in school she wanted a part-time job. She was an amazing worker with tremendous hustle. She was organized, on-the-ball and she could do anything. Last winter, she built a front porch for one of our office trailers. She'd never built anything before in her life. "It's something I wanted to do," she told me.

Mike was different. He had a can-do attitude and was more reliable than just about anybody I can remember. He went from general laborer to truck driver in less than a year. "I like to work hard," he told me.

Robert was different. He was the strongest person I've ever met. He could carry four 15-gal. trees (two in each hand) like they were three gallons. He was my "John Henry."

In the past two months, all of them have given their "two weeks' notice." John quit because he didn't fit in. Dan quit because he didn't feel appreciated and I pushed him too hard to finish what he started. Dennis retired. Brittany moved away. Mike and Robert found jobs that paid better.

It's depressing. It hurts when your best and brightest walk out the door. I worry what my other employees think. Do they share my faith that more good people will come in said door? That others will step up and perform?

As a general rule, I never try to persuade someone to stay. I don't offer more money. I don't make promises to fix the

things that irritated them. If they want to leave, they're gonna leave. And if they decide later that they made a mistake, then that's their decision. You have to let go. You have to let them quit on you.

Then get off your rear end and find some new talent! **GT**

---

*Art Parkerson lives and works at Lancaster Farms, a wholesale nursery in Suffolk, Virginia. To say hello, write to [art@lancasterfarms.com](mailto:art@lancasterfarms.com).*