

# GROWERTALKS

## Columns

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### Getting Cultured

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All of us could use a little culture.

I'm not talking about visiting an art museum or seeing a ballet. (Although I've been trying for years to talk my husband into taking me to the opera. So far, no dice.)

I'm referring to crop culture—the vital information every grower needs to grow the highest quality plants possible.

A trip to EuroAmerican Propagators' Open House in early September had me thinking about culture and why it will, and should, be a supplier's top priority. Head growers who work for the different suppliers don't have the same job they did 10 years ago, when they hid out in the

greenhouse, jotting down fertilizer concentrations and light levels. Talking to plants instead of people. Now, they're high profile, with more face-time directly with those who buy and grow the product.

This year, EuroAmerican changed up their itinerary a bit, separating each day to cater to a specific group. All of the culture, pest management and PGR stuff was put on the agenda for the grower day, when in the past the retailers and landscapers had to sit through hours of technical information that didn't really pertain to their side of the business.

Chris Berg, EuroAmerican's marketing manager, told me it was also easier for them to tailor their product messages, with their own growers front and center giving tips about specific crops and answering questions. It also gives the information more credibility when it comes from the people in the trenches. Would you be skeptical about how to stick tissue culture echinacea if a marketing manager was providing the details? Mmm, probably. (No offense to the marketing managers out there.)

Nelson Darden from Timberline in Hillister, Texas, said that he visits EuroAmerican's Open House at least every other year, so he's no stranger to these events. But this year, the day that focused on culture was a welcomed change.

“Everybody struggles with maybe 10% or 20% of their crop that actually takes up 80% of your time,” Nelson told me. “If all you had were the easy crops, then you’re not looking out for the new items. The simple tips [you get from the growers] save you so much energy in peak season.”

Does that mean the days of the basic crop are gone? Oh, the geraniums and petunias and dianthus will still be here—but now we’re dealing with the ptilotus and mecardonina and aubrieta.

And that’s what this month’s issue is all about—culture on the newest plants and more high-maintenance crops that give you that 80% headache.

So—since your day-to-day life is practically overflowing with culture, could you consider yourselves to be like Leonardo da Vinci or Tchaikovsky? Why not?

Maybe one of you cultured folks would be willing to see “Carmen” with me.