

GROWERTALKS

Columns

7/26/2011

Legoland

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

While walking the show during the OFA Short Course, Chris and I ran into Abe Van Wingerden, co-owner of Metrolina Greenhouses in Huntersville, North Carolina, and GrowerTalks columnist. After exchanging pleasantries, Chris asked Abe for his thoughts on the show.

Abe said something I thought was really interesting (forgive me while I paraphrase). He thinks of Short Course like a set of Legos. You have your piece—which represents your business—and then you go around the show gathering other pieces to add on to yours. Abe said no one company has all the solutions, so it takes multiple pieces to turn your piece into something complete.

Abe's poignant words had me looking at Short Course in a new way. But I also feel it applies to many aspects of our business, not just for the industry's largest trade show.

Where would the greenhouse owners be without general managers to run the place, production managers to schedule the crops, purchasing agent to bring in seeds and cuttings, growers to produce the best product possible and the employees that are in the trenches every day, transplanting, watering, getting the plants ready for shipping? Each one is their own Lego that fits perfectly in place, one on top of the other.

The concept is similar to a jigsaw puzzle, I suppose, but I prefer the Lego analogy since they give you the chance to keep building up and up—which you can continue to do depending on the quality and strength of the Legos around you. And if you really concentrate on how you're building, instead of just stacking pieces on top of each other without thinking.

The Amish are a good example of this (although I suspect their pieces would be more along the lines of Lincoln Logs, which are a toned-down version of Legos with a more traditional look). Chris Beytes took a road trip with former *Green Profit* editor and current Ball Horticultural IGC Business Manager Bill Calkins to Iowa for a look at a few Amish growers and a real Amish auction. You'll see that they can still maintain their traditional values while using some modern technology. And how they adapted to the current market since raising livestock wasn't producing the yield and profits they could get from growing flowers.

Looking for some other pieces to add to your business? We've got Part 2 of our Spring Trials coverage—this time focusing on perennials, woody ornamentals, pot plants and other cool things we saw that didn't necessarily fit into one category.

And for you plug growers, we've got the second installment of our Plug & Cutting Conference preview from Andrew Britten of Total Growth Solutions (a division of Costa Farms in Florida), who provides tips on getting the best out of your plugs.

You should count yourself lucky if you've got lots of other pieces that help you with your operation. Without the others around us, we'd sure be one lonely Lego.