

# GROWERTALKS

## Columns

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### Getting Better, Not Older

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You know you're getting old when you stand up and feel stiff after sitting for a long time. My friend and I knew we were old when the excitement of dating and boys was replaced by new kitchen appliances and family room furniture.

And you also know you're officially old when you look at something and say, "I remember when that cost ...!"

We get a little taste of that in this month's cover story. I again trekked down to the Ball archives to look through old issues of *GrowerTalks*. I wasn't born when the first energy crisis hit in 1973 (did I just make you feel old?), but I knew about it and thought it would make a good angle for a story about energy curtain trends. Almost every issue from '73 to about

'80 talked about fuel savings and how growers were struggling with skyrocketing oil prices and making a profit with 90-cent 6-packs and \$5.00 flats. Oil prices almost tripled within one year, so a lot of operations came up with ways to keep the heat in their houses. In came the energy curtain, which is now a staple in most greenhouses. Do you share the same needs as your peers and where do we see energy curtain technology going?

LEDs are fairly new to the scene and we're hearing about them more often. But you may not be aware that a few academics are working hard to find out how LEDs can help your greenhouse operation. We have a summary of what these university professors are doing and how their research will benefit you.

Remember the days when seasonal help was abundant? Many growers have found it difficult to maintain a full-time seasonal staff due to stricter immigration laws and none more so than Flowerwood Nursery in Alabama—which lost almost 70% of its labor force in one year. But implementing a Lean Flow process helped them alleviate some of the pain and stress, which also helped their current crop of employees.

As John Mayer says in his song, "Stop This Train"—"So scared of getting older/I'm only good at being young/So I play the numbers game to find a way to say that life has just begun." Maybe that's what I try to do when I mean that I'm getting better, not older. It's the kind of positivity we all need sometimes. Especially when

the weather stinks and profits are down. (Or you're only a few years from 40.) Gary Mangum was inspired to keep his chin up just by meeting a fellow named Peter.

And, as with every June issue, we have essays written by our Red Fox/Young Grower Award finalists. Though these three young men are under 35, don't feel like you're too old to read what they had to say. We asked them what made them excited about our industry and why our readers should be, too, and what they said was inspirational. And made me happy that we still have enthusiastic people in our industry. If you're in a bad mood, read their essays. Trust me—you'll feel better after you do.