

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Storytime

Jennifer Zurko

Quiet down, boys and girls. Sit down, crisscross applesauce, and let me tell you a story ...

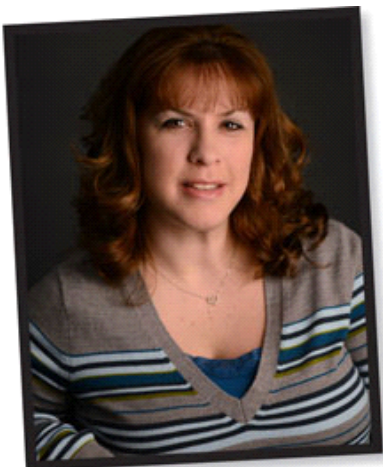
There once was this nice young man from Florida who worked very hard since he was a very little boy. He worked alongside his father at a tree and shrub nursery, in the hot, hot sun, every day after school and on the weekends. He was always very tired and dirty, but he learned the value of hard work.

When he got older, he had his own lawn maintenance business, mowing and taking care of people's lawns until he went to college, where he discovered what he wanted to be when he grew up ... he wanted to grow and take care of plants.

After leaving a yucky job with a mean boss, he finally found a place where he could be himself—growing plants, helping to solve problems and learning as much as he could—putting in the hard work, so that his dreams of running a nursery all by himself could one day be fulfilled.

He also played A LOT of golf.

The end.



JENNIFER ZURKO

For those of you who think young people are lazy, you need to meet Evan Barrington.

Evan is this year's Young Grower Award winner, and as I was interviewing him for this month's cover story, I found myself thinking how impressive he is. Not just for his work ethic—which would make anyone feel like a total slacker—but for his willingness to take advantage of opportunities, being flexible and open to change. When he found himself in a job he hated, he knew he needed to get outta there. When he had the chance to leave his small town for larger pastures, he jumped in with both feet.

Evan spends almost every waking moment moving, doing something—whether it's constantly checking in with his team, coming up with solutions to problems at the nursery, renovating an old house or spending time on the

golf course.

I kept thinking of the lessons I learned from children's stories and that Evan could be a character in many of Aesop's Fables ...

- Evan would play the ant in "The Ant & the Grasshopper," working all summer to store up food for the winter while the grasshopper wastes time goofing off. The moral: Work hard first and then you can play hard.
- Evan mentions that, even though he had a horrible experience with a particular supervisor, he learned how NOT to treat employees. In "The Lion, the Donkey & the Fox," Evan's fox—faced with having to figure out how to divvy out the food—would see that dividing it out equally just makes the lion mad, resulting in the death of the donkey. Giving a good portion of the food to the King of Beasts saves your hide. The moral: Know your audience and learn from the failure of others.
- "The Crow & the Pitcher," starring Evan as the crow, coming up with the bright idea of filling the pitcher with pebbles to make the water rise so he can have a drink. The moral: There's always a way to solve a problem. (Evan's problem-solving skills also reminded me of Harvey Keitel's character The Wolf in "Pulp Fiction"—"I'm Winston Wolfe. I solve problems.")

So if you're looking for a new story to read the kiddies or grandkiddies, try out the one about Evan Barrington.

And by no means does his story end here, but there are a lot of good life lessons to be learned from the one he's living right now. **GT**