

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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One New Position, Four Promotions at Ball

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Ball Horticultural Company has announced a new position: President of Ball Horticultural Company (BHC). Along with that comes four promotions.

Filling that new role of President of BHC will be Al Davidson, most recently the president of Ball Seed. Al will conduct the day-to-day management of the corporation, and supervise goals and strategies among the Ball business units. BHC is the umbrella corporation under which lives all the Ball divisions and joint ventures, including Ball Seed, PanAmerican Seed, Ball FloraPlant, Darwin Perennials, Star Roses & Plants, Ball ColorLink, Ball Ingenuity, Ball Colegrave (UK), Ball

Straathof (South Africa), Ball Australia and Ball Century (China). (And, yes, Ball Publishing.)

Pictured: From left: Karl Batschke, Anna Ball, Al Davidson, Alan Rouse and Jacco Kuipers.

Al has been with Ball for 33 years, starting with Ball Superior in Canada in 1987 (Al is Canadian; he grew up in his family's greenhouse, where his dad specialized in seedling flats, "which were really plugs before plugs," Al says.) In Ball Seed, Al has held the roles of Sales Manager, Director of Supplier Relations and, most recently, President. He also held the position of President of Ball FloraPlant.

Why create this new top-level position? CEO and Chairman Anna Ball explained: "The industry is growing very fast and we have lot of opportunities for growth. Strengthening the top team is an important way to assure that we can deliver on these growth opportunities."

Filling the vacuum at Ball Seed created by Al's promotion will be Ball CFO Alan Rouse. As CFO, Alan oversaw not only finance, but also IT, Human Resources and Seed Operations. Alan is a relative newcomer to Ball, having arrived from Mars (the pet food and candy giant) three years ago. Alan, originally from South Africa, has global finance and management experience, first with Gillette in South Africa and later with Mars in Africa, Russia and the U.S. Mars is also a family-owned company, which is one of the reasons he joined Ball.

Filling Alan's shoes as CFO will be Jacco Kuipers, a 25-year veteran of Ball, with stints in Finance, IT, Customer

Service and most recently as General Manager of Darwin Perennials. Jacco, a Dutch native, comes from a finance and greenhouse background—his father had a small accounting and insurance firm and most of his clients were either flower growers or vegetable growers. Jacco's first job was at age 11 in his uncle's rose nursery. "Once I was in the greenhouse and once I was in the industry, I never looked back," Jacco recalls.

Lastly, filling Jacco's former GM position at Darwin Perennials will be Karl Batschke, a 15-year Ball veteran. Karl is a third-generation plantsman, having come from a family greenhouse business in Michigan. He recalls coming to Ball Seed Field Day as a child. Karl worked at Smith Gardens and Skagit in the Pacific Northwest and was GM for Oglevee Ltd. before joining Ball FloraPlant as a production manager. He has been Global Product Manager for Darwin since 2009, shortly after Ball's acquisition of the company.

And what of Anna Ball? She remains CEO and Chairman of the Board. Says Anna, "Our industry is in a terrific position, with all sorts of growth opportunities. If we are going to handle the growth responsibly, we need to strengthen our top team. These moves do that. With Al as president, I will be able to devote more time to strategy, resource allocation, industry relations, the future of the company, and maintaining and strengthening our culture and family values." **GT**