

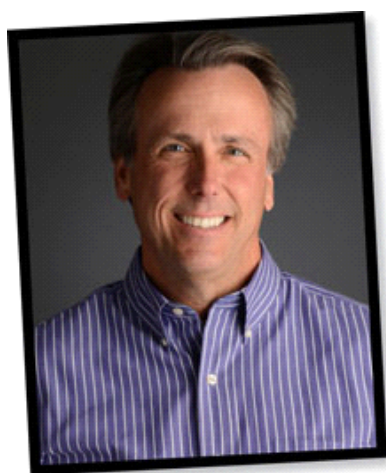
GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

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2021: The Year in Rearview

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They say you can't know where you're going unless you know where you've been, hence, this look back at the major events of the year we've just about completed. It's mid-November as I write this, so I can't comment on December; my hope is that nothing of consequence will happen in the twelfth month other than our annual debate over painted poinsettias (I like 'em!).

November. Proven Winners announces they're getting into the houseplant market via a partnership with new grower The Plant Company, owned by two young members of the vanWingerden family, Jason and Wesley, and Jason's brother-in-law Frank Paul. The main point of my story was the production of foliage in Virginia in a high-tech greenhouse using European-style production.

October. Managing editor Jen Zurko reported on why tulip bulbs are in short supply this fall: record-breaking rain in the Netherlands back in June that left tulip fields underwater and bulbs rotting from the inside out—"choked centers," it's called. Luckily, other bulbs, such as hyacinths, were spared. Also, reported Jen, Easter lilies will be in good supply thanks to a "bumper crop" in California.

September. I reported the passing of Gary Miller, founder of Milgro Nurseries, and Billy Powell, founder of Powell Plant Farm, which, for years, was one of the country's largest operations (it's now an Altman Specialty Plants location).

August. Cut flower promotion orders have been tried for decades ... and failed every time. Is it time to try it again? That's what the folks behind Floral Board are hoping. They held numerous informational webinars to present the elements of the draft order to see if it's something the industry will support. If the idea gets OK'd and goes into operation, they say it could generate up to \$19 million for the promotion of cut flowers and greens.

July. After gathering and tallying your scores in my weekly Spring Sales Survey, I revealed the final, season-long results: The U.S. scored 8.2 and Canada scored 8.1 (on a scale of 1-10). That was identical (but reversed) to 2020's 8.1 in the U.S. and 8.2 in Canada. I wrote that the two years will go down as the best back-to-back seasons in anyone's memory.

June. Three of us editors covered the first California Summer Trials, covering new varieties from about two dozen companies. We saw plenty of good color additions, but nothing we felt was a game changer (although there was a new hydrangea by that very name). Also, sadly, three passings to report this month: Russell Weiss of Kurt Weiss

Greenhouses; Juan St. Amant, formerly of Plug Connection; and Allen Monsma, founder of A.M.A. Horticulture.

May. “Insanity” and “bonkers” were two adjectives you used to describe Mother’s Day Weekend, which scored 9.4 in the U.S. and 9.0 in Canada. Compare that to 2020 when the holiday scored 8.2/8.9. Unfortunately, Memorial Day didn’t fare as well, scoring 7.5/8.0. “Weather is still king” you wrote of the miserable conditions across much of the eastern U.S.

April. As Spring 2021 began, the Garden Center Group shared some results from its members’ 2020 P&L Study that showed average total sales for the year were a whopping 25.1% above 2019 results. That was so good, they had to add another category to their member benchmarks: “Best of the Best.” We had no idea in April that 2021 would be even better for many retailers.

March. I wrote of three passings this month: Norwin Heimos of N.G. Heimos Greenhouse and Millstadt Young Plants; Ramsey Yoder, former CEO and Chairman of Yoder Brothers; and Ray Blew of Centerton Nurseries. And I warned you about new greenhouse light pollution laws going into effect in two cities in Ontario, Canada.

February. Never before have I had to report on deep snow and a deep freeze in Texas until Winter Storm Uri caused damage across East Texas. Dallas dropped to -2F and got 4 to 6 in. of snow. And we all know about the problem with natural gas supplies and frozen wind turbines that hadn’t been winterproofed.

January. The year started off with the good news that petunias with the A1DFR gene—the so-called “orange petunias” (even though many of them aren’t orange)—could once again be sold in the U.S., thanks to a ruling by the USDA. Meanwhile the Southern Nursery Association stopped operations after 121 years serving the region’s industry.

Those are just a few of the highlights and happenings from 2021. What does 2022 have in store for us? I can’t wait to read what I write about! **GT**