

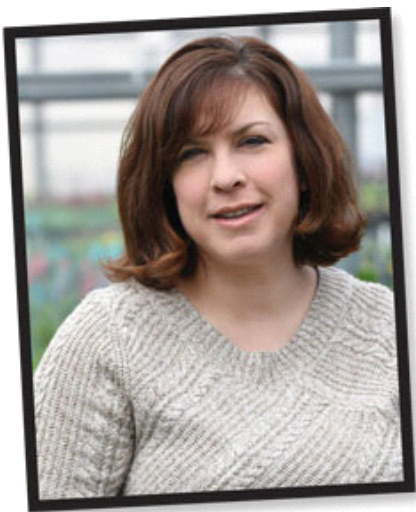
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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A Promising Young Man

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

I'm going to pull back the curtain a bit ... Every March, we Ball Publishing editors (Chris, Jen, Bill and me) sit down and go through all of the nominations we've received for our Young Grower and Young Retailer Awards.

It's no easy task—it takes over two hours because we've been very lucky to receive quite a few nominations. And we go through every single one, calling out the parts that jump out at us, debating why this young professional should go into the "yes" or "maybe" pile.

It's always hard to choose three finalists from a large stack of nominations. And our panel of judges has told me that it's getting more difficult to vote on a winner.

We've speculated that maybe it's because the "crop" of young growers and retailers in our industry is just getting better. That could certainly be

true. Regardless of the reason, we're blessed that there have been enough of these passionate, motivated go-getters to keep our annual awards going for 18 years.

This year's winner is Quinten Henning, who's VP and fourth generation of his family's operation, Henning's Farm & Greenhouses in DeMotte, Indiana.

Quinten's nomination form was impressive—it wasn't just about all of his responsibilities on the farm (which are extensive), but also showed a glimpse of his passion and personality. He nominated himself and really made a case for why he felt he should be considered for the award, saying things like:

"I know that perfection is unattainable, but I still always strive for it."

"Growing is what I do; it's in my blood."

"Nothing is more fulfilling than seeing my products on a shelf or in a landscape bed ..."

"I am likely one of the youngest being nominated for this award, but I am managing a business that does over \$1.5 million a year and is still growing."

That's when we double checked his birthday and realized he's only 23 years old. (He'll be 24 in November.)

Quinten may be a very young man, but he's got years of experience and knowledge. On the flipside of that, he knows that he's still got so much to learn, fully taking advantage of the chances to visit growers or attend industry events. I ran into him multiple times during Cultivate and he was soaking it all in. He isn't shy about standing up and talking in front of a room full of people. And, like a true grower and business owner in this industry, he likes to share experiences and bounce ideas off of his peers.

Also in this issue, we've brought back our extended Culture Notes section, with nine different new varieties from CAST and Cultivate.

And speaking of Cultivate, we have our grower-focused coverage of horticulture's largest U.S. trade show. (You can see the stuff for retailers that Jen and Ellen saw in Columbus on the *Green Profit* side.)

As I was interviewing Quinten for this month's cover story, a thought popped into my head: "What was I doing at 23 years old?" I was saving up to move in with my boyfriend (now husband), traveling, enjoying as much nightlife as possible, working at a job I hated, questioning what I was going to do with my life ... I certainly wasn't vice president of a \$1 million company and working my tail off.

If you've found yourself lamenting about the lack of work ethic and motivation with the younger generation, I highly recommend you read my story about Quinten. I promise it will give you hope for the future. **GT**