

GROWERTALKS

Features

12/1/2022

Wages: Onward & Upward

Compiled by Jennifer Zurko, Chris Beytes & Paul Black

After we sent out the request for you, our dear readers, to take our now 27th annual Wage & Benefit Survey, one of our close industry friends asked why we don't just take away the \$7.01 to \$8.50 category from the hourly employees section.

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"Nobody pays that low a wage anymore," he said.

We thought, "That's a good question," so we did a little digging. We checked back from a few random years to see if there was a pattern and we definitely found one. For the main type of employee that growers need during peak—and are currently the hardest to find—wages for Temp/Seasonal General Labor have gone up significantly. In 2013, 38% of growers in the U.S. paid seasonal labor \$7.01 to \$8.50. This year, it's 1%.

Wages for Full-Time General Labor in the U.S. also went up—for those making \$15 or more, it was 8% in 2013; this year, it's 71%. And if you look at those making more than \$17.50, it wasn't as high, but definitely trending upward. (We didn't even ask as high as \$17.50 in 2013 and 2018.)

You're also paying other positions more, including entry-level growers with two years or less of experience, head grower—and even owners are making more than compared to 2013. (See the breakdown in the charts.)

Temp/Seasonal General Labor (U.S.) making \$7.01 to 8.50:

2022 – 1%

2021 – 3%

2020 – 5%

2018 – 10%

2013 – 38%

Full-Time General Labor (U.S.) making \$15 or more:

2022 - 71%

2021 – 54%

2020 – 47%

2018 - 27%

2013 – 8%

Full-Time General Labor (U.S.) making more than \$17.50:

2022 – 30%

2021 – 20%

2020 – 17%

2018 – *

2013 – *

***\$15 or more was our top category**

Grower – 0-2 Years (U.S.) Making \$40,000 or more:

2022 – 33%

2021 – 29%

2020 – 23%

2018 – 28%

2013 – 6%

Grower – 0-2 Years (U.S.) making \$50,000 or more:

2022 – 20%

2021 – 8%

2020 – 6%

2018 – 9%

2013 – 3%

Head Grower (U.S.) making \$80,000 or more:

2022 – 51%

2021 – 23%

2020 – 22%

2018 – 20%

2013 – 13%

Owner (U.S.) making \$100,000 or more:

2022 – 54%

2021 – 36%

2020 – 42%

2018 – 39%

2013 – 26%

Obviously, a lot of factors have contributed to this pattern we've been seeing for a few years now: minimum wage increases in many states and counties around the country, and more competition for workers from other industries.

But some of our respondents said that their employees are also asking for better compensation. The last question is always open-ended, and this year we asked: Where have you had success finding new employees? And what creative incentives have worked for attracting and/or keeping good employees?

For those who responded, there were three things that were mentioned repeatedly: flexible schedules, more compensation and the use of jobs sites, like Indeed. Some notable comments were:

"Employees like more compensation and flexible schedules."

"Be competitive on wages."

"Good pay and treating them as family."

"Word of mouth [is] still the most successful. Both with finding GOOD people [and] people who want to work rather

than have to.”

“Treating everyone equal no matter what position they hold and treating them like I would want to be treated.”

“We don’t have any particularly creative incentives; we just try to provide a respectful work environment with good pay plus overtime.”

So it would seem that good wages are only part of the recipe for hiring and retaining good employees—a good working environment needs to be part of the mix, too.

Other ways growers are trying to find workers included:

- Social media
- Hiring foreign-born employees and seniors
- Local advertising
- Local ads
- Local university
- Local temp agency
- Using contract workers
- Employee referrals
- Community outreach
- Career fairs

Simple Courtesy

By Bob Zahra

Executive search consultant Michael Garnes said, “There are two types of people in the world: givers and takers.”

There are also the courteous and the discourteous, the polite and the impolite, individuals with good manners and those with bad manners. A continuum connects the disparate poles between courteous and discourteous, good and bad, etc.

Emily Post said, “Manners are a sensitive awareness of the feelings of others. If you have that awareness, you have good manners, no matter what fork you use.”

Why is simple courtesy a topic worthy of consideration under the umbrella of hiring (and being hired) in the greater horticulture industry? A person could argue convincingly that in the last 10 years certain national leaders have made it a point to lead our country to repudiate traditional courtesy and traditional good manners, arguing that toughness alone has primacy.

Here’s a question: Is the candidate who’s interviewed as a likely new employee in your company treated with the same respect as the possible new customer? How the hiring authority interacts with a candidate says much about the hiring authority and even more about the company, and it can be argued that the potential, excellent, long-term employee is every bit as important to the company’s future as the possible new customer—in many cases more so. Both should be treated thoughtfully, respectfully and courteously. Toughness has its place in the overall picture, but not at the expense of good will and simple courtesy.

As a candidate in pursuit of career advancement, do you respond promptly or are you casual about keeping your commitments to the hiring authority? As Ms. Post wrote, do you have a “sensitive awareness to the feelings of others?” Being reliable, doing what you say you’ll do, is inextricably tied to “hireability” and promotability. The days of innumerable horticulture employment options for the upwardly mobile may be upon us now, but—for the same

reason stock market charts don't point straight up year after year—neither does hiring. The wise person recognizes the inherent short-lived nature of life-changing employment opportunities and is prepared to seize immediately the most advantageous. It can take a lifetime for an incumbent industry leader to retire.

Of all the positive things one could say about Johnny Carson—funny, intelligent, talented, perfect posture, great dresser—comedian Steve Martin said, “Johnny was polite.”

The talented industry individuals who are discourteous, who are unthoughtful or are insensitive to the feelings of others, will not reach their true potential. They may retire happily right where they are, but they're unrecruitable and unpromotable. They won't come close to achieving the contribution of the people for whom they work.

On the other hand, it's altogether possible to drive a hard business bargain, while at the same time remaining polite and courteous. In this small town we call the international horticulture industry, all of us will continue to bump into each other throughout our careers and it seems wise to plan accordingly.

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Who responded to our survey?

Business Type

Grower AND Retailer	36%
Wholesale Grower Only	64%

Production Size

Less than 25,000 sq. ft.	18%
25,000 to 50,000 sq. ft.	9%
50,000 to 100,000 sq. ft.	15%
100,000 to 250,000 sq. ft.	11%
250,000 to 500,000 sq. ft.	11%
500,000 to 1 million sq. ft.	12%
More than 1 million sq. ft.	24%

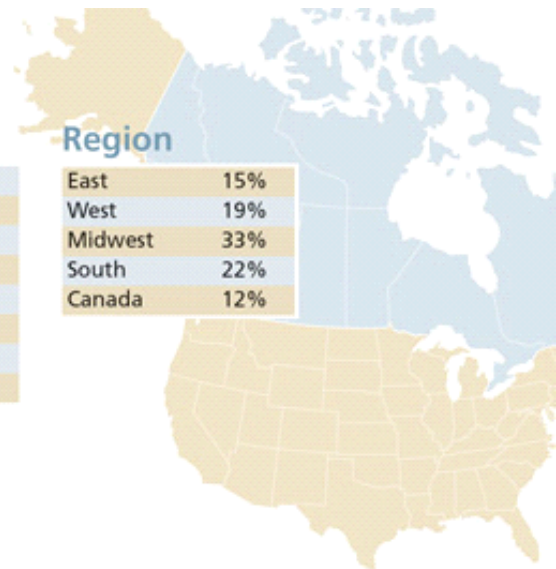
Customer Base

IGCs	42%
Big box stores	24%
Supermarkets	23%
Florists	19%
Landscapers	53%
Other wholesalers	41%
Direct to consumer	39%
Other*	14%

*Other indicates fundraisers, research projects, churches and public gardens

Region

East	15%
West	19%
Midwest	33%
South	22%
Canada	12%



HOURLY EMPLOYEES

United States

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	1%	3%	16%	44%	27%	10%
Part-Time General Labor	1%	2%	17%	43%	31%	6%
Full-Time General Labor	1%	1%	4%	24%	41%	30%

Canada

Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	0%	4%	24%	48%	24%
Part-Time General Labor	0%	0%	0%	18%	55%	27%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%

The value between the U.S. and Canadian dollar is about a 35-cent difference. Because of space constraints, we're not showing both.

SALARY EMPLOYEES

United States

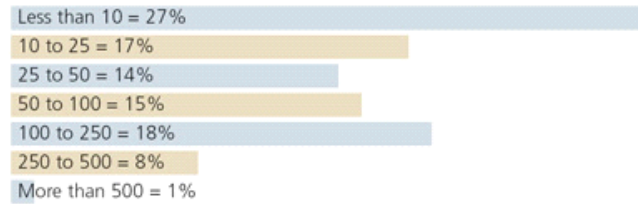
(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	8%	22%	42%	18%	6%	3%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	3%	9%	12%	37%	18%	16%	3%	1%	2%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	3%	3%	9%	16%	26%	21%	14%	3%	4%	3%
Head Grower	3%	4%	1%	6%	13%	18%	13%	17%	7%	17%
Merchandiser	10%	16%	16%	31%	16%	8%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	10%	10%	8%	22%	19%	12%	12%	2%	3%	2%
Sales Representative	5%	3%	7%	17%	20%	16%	10%	9%	5%	7%
Sales Manager	6%	2%	3%	9%	13%	7%	11%	16%	17%	16%
General Manager	5%	2%	2%	4%	9%	7%	15%	9%	17%	31%
Owner	2%	4%	3%	4%	8%	9%	2%	8%	6%	54%

Canada

Grower (0-2 Years)	0%	0%	31%	31%	19%	6%	6%	0%	6%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	0%	0%	13%	33%	27%	13%	0%	7%	0%	7%
Grower (6+ Years)	0%	0%	18%	12%	24%	18%	18%	0%	6%	6%
Head Grower	0%	0%	6%	0%	12%	24%	12%	24%	18%	6%
Merchandiser	10%	0%	20%	20%	10%	20%	0%	10%	10%	0%
Merchandise Manager	8%	0%	25%	8%	0%	42%	0%	0%	8%	8%
Sales Representative	0%	0%	8%	17%	17%	25%	0%	8%	17%	8%
Sales Manager	0%	0%	8%	0%	0%	15%	38%	8%	8%	23%
General Manager	0%	0%	6%	0%	6%	13%	13%	38%	0%	25%
Owner	0%	0%	0%	11%	11%	6%	0%	6%	17%	50%

Staffing

How many people do you employ during peak season?



Staffing Plans for 2022

(survey year)	Add Staff	Reduce Staff	Keep Staff the Same	I Don't Know
2022	24%	10%	58%	9%
2021	40%	2%	46%	11%
2020	39%	2%	51%	9%
2019	32%	4%	56%	8%
2018	29%	5%	60%	6%
2017	32%	6%	55%	8%
2016	30%	6%	58%	7%
2015	29%	7%	59%	5%
2014	27%	6%	59%	9%
2013	24%	7%	63%	7%
2012	22%	9%	63%	7%

Healthcare & other benefits

Which benefits do you currently offer your employees?

2022	Full-Time	Part-Time
401(k)	55%	7%
Pension	8%	2%
Annual Bonus	65%	28%
Health Insurance	69%	11%
Dental Insurance	47%	6%
Life Insurance	37%	3%
Sick Leave	60%	16%
Disability	32%	7%
Paid Vacation	84%	14%
Paid Holidays	78%	26%
*Other	8%	3%

*Other includes: Free vegetables, personal days off, hunting rights, extra time off in compensation for extra hours worked, tuition reimbursement, simple IRA and employee discounts

2012	Full-Time	Part-Time
401(k)	32%	6%
Pension	9%	1%
Annual Bonus	39%	31%
Health Insurance	55%	3%
Dental Insurance	30%	1%
Life Insurance	22%	1%
Sick Leave	34%	4%
Disability	20%	1%
Paid Vacation	72%	16%
Paid Holidays	60%	16%
*Other		

Which benefits do your employees consider the most important/valuable?

401(k)	31%
Pension	6%
Annual Bonus	45%
Health Insurance	57%
Dental Insurance	23%
Life Insurance	11%
Sick Leave	32%
Disability	9%
Paid Vacation	63%
Paid Holidays	51%
*Other	6%

*Other includes: hunting rights, product discounts, free plants and paid leave

BY SIZE

Under 100,000 Square Feet

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	5%	23%	32%	26%	14%
Part-Time General Labor	1%	3%	20%	36%	30%	10%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	1%	5%	22%	36%	35%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	14%	29%	29%	14%	11%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	10%	23%	20%	17%	23%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	5%	8%	19%	19%	27%	14%	0%	3%	3%	3%
Head Grower	9%	9%	6%	11%	28%	15%	13%	6%	4%	0%
Merchandise	13%	29%	17%	29%	8%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	21%	21%	21%	11%	21%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Sales Representative	16%	11%	16%	11%	26%	0%	11%	5%	0%	5%
Sales Manager	21%	11%	11%	16%	16%	5%	5%	11%	0%	5%
General Manager	13%	5%	5%	5%	21%	10%	18%	10%	8%	5%
Owner	6%	11%	6%	11%	17%	15%	2%	6%	6%	19%

More Than 100,000 Square Feet

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	1%	1%	10%	48%	32%	9%
Part-Time General Labor	1%	1%	12%	41%	37%	8%
Full-Time General Labor	1%	0%	2%	21%	45%	30%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	2%	10%	33%	31%	14%	5%	4%	1%	1%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	1%	3%	10%	42%	18%	18%	3%	2%	2%	1%
Grower (6+ Years)	1%	0%	6%	14%	25%	23%	20%	2%	5%	4%
Head Grower	0%	1%	0%	3%	6%	20%	13%	23%	11%	23%
Merchandise	8%	6%	17%	29%	19%	13%	2%	4%	2%	0%
Merchandise Manager	6%	4%	8%	23%	13%	23%	12%	2%	6%	4%
Sales Representative	1%	1%	5%	19%	18%	22%	9%	10%	8%	8%
Sales Manager	1%	0%	2%	6%	11%	8%	17%	16%	19%	19%
General Manager	1%	0%	1%	3%	4%	6%	13%	13%	18%	40%
Owner	0%	0%	1%	2%	4%	5%	2%	8%	8%	70%

BY BUSINESS TYPE

Wholesale Grower

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	1%	2%	13%	44%	30%	11%
Part-Time General Labor	1%	1%	16%	39%	36%	8%
Full-Time General Labor	1%	0%	4%	21%	44%	30%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	4%	10%	31%	28%	15%	6%	4%	1%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	1%	4%	12%	36%	20%	20%	3%	2%	1%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	1%	0%	9%	16%	23%	20%	19%	3%	5%	3%
Head Grower	1%	0%	0%	5%	7%	16%	16%	24%	13%	19%
Merchandise	14%	5%	9%	34%	16%	14%	2%	5%	2%	0%
Merchandise Manager	11%	2%	5%	11%	20%	20%	16%	2%	7%	5%
Sales Representative	3%	0%	4%	17%	21%	17%	12%	9%	7%	9%
Sales Manager	3%	0%	0%	3%	13%	9%	18%	14%	20%	20%
General Manager	3%	0%	2%	3%	4%	6%	16%	13%	19%	35%
Owner	2%	1%	1%	2%	5%	4%	2%	5%	10%	67%

Retail Grower

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	4%	20%	34%	30%	11%
Part-Time General Labor	2%	3%	15%	39%	31%	11%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	2%	3%	23%	36%	36%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	8%	27%	32%	22%	8%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	8%	17%	14%	36%	17%	3%	0%	0%	3%	3%
Grower (6+ Years)	5%	8%	13%	15%	28%	21%	3%	0%	3%	5%
Head Grower	4%	11%	6%	6%	23%	23%	9%	6%	0%	11%
Merchandise	4%	29%	29%	21%	14%	4%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	7%	19%	22%	33%	7%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sales Representative	9%	13%	17%	17%	13%	17%	0%	9%	4%	0%
Sales Manager	12%	8%	15%	23%	8%	4%	4%	15%	4%	8%
General Manager	9%	6%	3%	6%	20%	11%	11%	11%	6%	17%
Owner	2%	8%	6%	10%	14%	16%	2%	12%	2%	27%

BY REGION

EAST

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	3%	10%	38%	34%	14%
Part-Time General Labor	0%	0%	12%	38%	38%	12%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	0%	3%	14%	38%	45%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	0%	12%	35%	41%	6%	0%	6%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	0%	0%	13%	50%	31%	0%	0%	0%	6%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	0%	0%	10%	19%	19%	29%	5%	0%	5%	14%
Head Grower	0%	0%	5%	0%	14%	19%	10%	24%	0%	29%
Merchandise	10%	0%	10%	20%	40%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	0%	0%	18%	9%	27%	18%	18%	0%	9%	0%
Sales Representative	0%	0%	10%	10%	30%	20%	0%	20%	0%	10%
Sales Manager	0%	0%	0%	9%	18%	9%	9%	18%	9%	27%
General Manager	0%	0%	5%	0%	10%	5%	14%	10%	19%	38%
Owner	0%	0%	5%	5%	5%	5%	0%	15%	0%	65%

MIDWEST

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	1%	15%	47%	26%	10%
Part-Time General Labor	0%	2%	8%	48%	36%	7%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	2%	3%	14%	44%	37%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	10%	15%	35%	23%	15%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	7%	7%	16%	40%	16%	13%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	7%	0%	7%	18%	27%	25%	11%	2%	2%	0%
Head Grower	8%	2%	2%	4%	16%	20%	12%	18%	6%	10%
Merchandise	10%	17%	21%	38%	14%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	14%	7%	7%	32%	18%	11%	7%	0%	0%	4%
Sales Representative	12%	3%	12%	18%	24%	15%	9%	9%	0%	0%
Sales Manager	14%	0%	5%	11%	16%	3%	14%	24%	5%	8%
General Manager	10%	0%	0%	7%	12%	10%	14%	17%	12%	19%
Owner	4%	2%	4%	4%	6%	10%	6%	8%	8%	46%

WEST

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	3%	0%	6%	36%	47%	8%
Part-Time General Labor	3%	0%	12%	35%	41%	9%
Full-Time General Labor	3%	0%	3%	20%	43%	33%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	4%	18%	21%	29%	14%	11%	4%	0%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	0%	17%	7%	23%	20%	27%	3%	3%	0%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	0%	11%	11%	11%	21%	11%	21%	7%	7%	0%
Head Grower	0%	13%	0%	9%	3%	19%	13%	13%	16%	16%
Merchandise	10%	40%	10%	30%	0%	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	13%	38%	13%	25%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Sales Representative	0%	9%	0%	9%	18%	14%	14%	5%	9%	23%
Sales Manager	0%	9%	0%	5%	5%	14%	14%	5%	27%	23%
General Manager	3%	7%	0%	3%	0%	7%	17%	0%	13%	50%
Owner	0%	8%	0%	4%	4%	4%	0%	8%	0%	73%

SOUTH

(per hour)	\$7.01-\$8.50	\$8.51-\$10.00	\$10.01-\$12.50	\$12.51-\$15.00	\$15.01-\$17.50	More than \$17.50
Temp/Seasonal General Labor	0%	7%	33%	49%	5%	7%
Part-Time General Labor	3%	5%	38%	44%	10%	0%
Full-Time General Labor	0%	0%	7%	49%	35%	9%

(per year)	Less than \$20,000	\$20,000-\$30,000	\$30,000-\$40,000	\$40,000-\$50,000	\$50,000-\$60,000	\$60,000-\$70,000	\$70,000-\$80,000	\$80,000-\$90,000	\$90,000-\$100,000	More than \$100,000
Grower (0-2 Years)	4%	21%	32%	18%	14%	7%	0%	4%	0%	0%
Grower (3-5 Years)	4%	8%	13%	38%	13%	17%	4%	0%	4%	0%
Grower (6+ Years)	0%	0%	8%	17%	33%	17%	17%	0%	4%	4%
Head Grower	0%	0%	0%	9%	16%	13%	19%	16%	6%	22%
Merchandise	8%	8%	15%	23%	15%	23%	8%	0%	0%	0%
Merchandise Manager	8%	8%	0%	8%	17%	17%	25%	8%	8%	0%
Sales Representative	0%	0%	5%	30%	10%	20%	15%	10%	10%	0%
Sales Manager	0%	0%	5%	11%	16%	5%	5%	11%	32%	16%
General Manager	3%	0%	3%	3%	13%	7%	13%	7%	27%	23%
Owner	3%	6%	3%	3%	14%	11%	0%	3%	11%	46%