

GROWERTALKS

Acres & Acres

1/1/2023

Back in Time

Chris Beytes



CHRIS BEYTES

In the 29 January columns I've written for *GrowerTalks*, I've never given you a list of New Year's Resolutions to consider. Nor did any of my predecessors. We wouldn't dare preach to you that way. How you run your business is your business; our business is keeping you informed and up to date.

Instead, here's what the editors have given you to chew on in the January issues of 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70 and 80 years ago. It doesn't surprise me that the topics of interest then were the same topics we deal with today.

January 1943. "Facing 1943 with the prospect of increased rationing, more taxes and less manpower, the new season's outlook is at least perplexing," wrote George J. Ball. World War II was raging and all the boys of fighting age were overseas. Labor was a problem, but George had a solution: "An encouraging note ... is the adaptability of women to greenhouse work. Not

only do they generally like it, but they get over much of our work more efficiently than some men can. ... our experiment with women in the greenhouse convinces us that they are a permanent part of our future greenhouse help."

January 1953. Vic Ball, now editor (his father passed in 1949), led off the year with "New Annuals for '53" and he commented on the importance of "new": "As recently as 12 to 15 years ago, a catalog would be published without listing one really new variety of any importance. This increasing tendency on the part of seedsmen to offer good, new varieties each year is only a reflection of the new and better merchandise being offered in all lines of business."

January 1963. Vic had done a major European trip in late '62. He observed, "The age-old isolation between U.S./English/European growers is fast vanishing. Europe was recently a week away; today it is only hours. The world is truly becoming a small one, horticulturally ... inevitably, what happens in Europe or England will increasingly affect flower growers in the U.S. ... and the reverse is certainly true."

January 1973. "Want to boost your plant sales in '73?" To that end, Vic offered success stories from seven retail growers and four wholesale growers. Profiled were Peterson's (PA), Oman's Flower Farm (IL), **Kailhofer's** (WI), Fred Pence (KS), **Bayside Gardens** (WI), **Schaefer's** (IL), SS. Couch & Sons (TN). Wholesale growers were American Plant Growers (CA), **Sedan Floral** (KS), Tak Fujii (CA) and M.V. Nurseries (CA). I believe four of the 11 (in bold) are still in business today.

January 1983. Vic's Viewpoint column was on the topic of the keeping quality of our flowers. "No, that's wrong," he

corrected himself. “The words should be ‘days of enjoyment’ for our end user. How many days can she enjoy those roses? Or that pot mum?” He quoted Tom Lavagetto, then with grocery chain Jewel: “The lady who buys a plant from us will remember how long it lasted a lot longer than what it cost.”

January 1993. Wayne Dixon and Carol Felix listed nine trends “that can turn into garden profits.” 1. Staying Home (after the rush of the '80s); 2. Nothing but the Best (“Shoppers are buying less, but they’re buying the best.”); 3. Fitness is In (it still is); 4. Create a Shopping Adventure (retailtainment); 5. Know Your Customer (data); 6. Customize (use that data); 7. The Home Office (and you thought that was new); 8. The Three “Es” (ethics, education, environment, i.e. sustainability); and 9. On the Fast Track (Americans are working longer than ever, so anything that saves time “will be a big winner in the '90s and beyond.”).

January 2003. In my column, I wrote about the Darwinian aspect of our business—survival of the fittest. Some would say that size is key: small growers are more nimble or large growers can be more efficient. I argued that it’s not how big you are, it’s how big you think. Successful growers “think big, they think outside the box. They turn their ideas into actions. And they do so ... season after season.”

January 2013. Our cover story, “Why DOESN’T She Garden,” encapsulating research commissioned by parent company Ball Horticultural Company to find out why non-gardeners are non-gardeners. The findings? While gardeners and non-gardeners agree that gardening has extrinsic (aesthetic and functional) value, non-gardeners fail to see its intrinsic value (expressing creativity, getting close to nature, stress reduction, etc.). Therefore, they think, “Gardening is too much time, money and/or effort for what I’ll get out of it.”

January 2023. It seems the editor on duty couldn’t come up with a worthwhile topic, so he lazily rehashed content from past issues. **GT**