

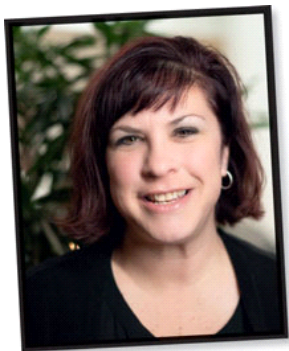
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

7/1/2023

The Good Ol' Days

Jennifer Zurko



JENNIFER ZURKO

Remember when there was a time when you had stacks of job applications and enough labor to get through the spring season? (If that was actually ever a real thing.) Those days are over.

Now you're going through the process of hiring hundreds of people just to fill a few dozen jobs during the busiest time of the year.

But there is an option for greenhouse growers who've tried everything and done everything to secure the labor they need when they need it—the H-2A guestworker visa program. You may have heard your nursery and field cut flower grower friends mention that they use H-2A to hire workers and have been for years. You may have thought it was just for "big ag," dairy farmers and ranchers. You may think it's a lot of

paperwork and red tape and it's a government program, so it sounds like a pain—and you'd be right. But when you wake up every spring morning wondering if you'll have enough hands to help get your product out the door that day, you'll have to admit that maybe it's time to think about another way to find labor.

As you'll read in my cover story this month, there are greenhouse operations that have had to sit down and make the difficult decision to turn to the H-2A program to help them find the labor they need. At a minimum, to service the customers they have. That's in the short-term. They also have to think long-term, too—if you can't get enough labor for three months to handle the stuff you have now, what about if you want to expand? Could you seriously bank on making expansion plans with no reliable staff? H-2A may be the answer to all of your labor problems.

Remember when we saw movies like "I, Robot" and "Ex Machina" and thought, "Nahhhh. That'll never happen in my lifetime?" It's looking like we're getting closer to those days.

We've been talking A LOT about AI in these pages during the last few months and we have an excellent piece by Katie Elzer-Peters on the *Green Profit* side about how AI can impact your business, and how to balance between completely ignoring it and asking ChatGPT to do everything. It's worth a flip to read it.

Remember when there was a time that there were actual packs at Pack Trials? And it was called Pack Trials? Actually, those days aren't really over because we did see packs at this year's California Spring Trials. You can check out our coverage of the new annuals we saw in the first part of our CAST coverage. And see highlights of the annuals we think are perfect for retail in *Green Profit*.

I don't necessarily miss seeing packs at the trials, but it's nice that not everything from the good ol' days has gone by

the wayside. Does that make me sound like an old lady? Yeah, probably. I have noticed I blurt out things like, "Remember when gas was, like, \$1.50 a gallon? Those days are over." **GT**