

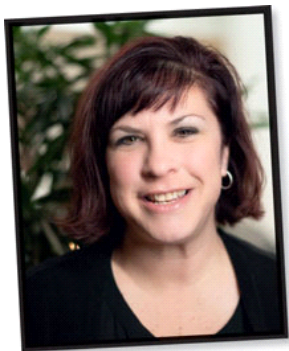
GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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Taking Chances

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I was recently talking to a friend who's I've known for over 30 years. There was lots to catch up on and, of course, our chat included an update on our professional lives. He asked, "I remember you were so set on pursuing sports journalism—how the heck did you end up in horticulture?"

True, sports and horticulture aren't very similar, so I wasn't surprised that he was surprised. After I went into my spiel on my journey into becoming a horticulture journalist, I ended with, "My career has been an interesting blend of taking risks and a little bit of luck."

I used to think I was someone who always played it safe—not necessarily taking the easy way, but one that was less scary and less stressful. But looking back at my 20 years in this industry, I've realized that I've made some risky choices. Thankfully, most of those have paid off and I'm in a great place professionally. (If I was only that lucky in other aspects of my life, but that's another story over drinks ...)

Why don't more of us take more risks? In our personal and professional lives, we're always presented with new opportunities to better our situation, offering us a chance to learn new things or take on new challenges. I think there are two main reasons why people don't take risks: fear and timing.

When I read Bossman Beytes' cover story on The Plant Company, my first thought was, "Man, those guys are brave." I know a lot of you run your own operations, but many of them may have been handed down as part of the succession plan. Jason vanWingerden looked at his family's business and asked a hard question of himself: Should I just go and start my own venture? He found himself at a crossroads—looked left, then right—acknowledged the risks and decided to go for it.

Not only were Jason and his brother-in-law Frank Paul building a greenhouse operation from the ground up, but they were doing it without a fully established customer base and during a global pandemic. But often times with risk comes a little luck, and when Proven Winners walked in the door, Jason and Frank knew all of those risks they'd taken paid off.

Ball Publishing also took a little bit of a risk this year. During the past couple of years, we've conducted our annual Wage & Benefit Survey through an informal service provider. This year, we've partnered with AmericanHort and research firm Industry Insights to collect and help us analyze the data from our survey respondents. The tables may look a bit different, but the information is the same, and we think you'll like that it's a bit easier to read, too.

Our perennial expert Paul Pilon talks about his journey into using biologicals and the risks he took. Austin Bryant discusses how not being transparent or communicating with your suppliers and customers can be risky business. And Art Parkerson cautions skipping out on MANTS at your own risk (you don't want to miss the party!).

I wonder what opportunities I'll be presented with in the future, what risks I'll be taking? One thing I do know is that life never disappoints in making things interesting. There's never a shortage of hard decisions to be made that come with some risk. **GT**