GROWERTALKS

Features

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Benefits Attract

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This is the 28th year we've been conducting our annual Wage & Benefit Survey, and if you're a regular reader, you may notice something a little different this time.

We've partnered with AmericanHort and research firm Industry Insights to create a more robust survey and help collect the data. This was for a couple of reasons. First, Industry Insights provides us with a much better survey interface. We're very grateful to Survey Monkey (which was a useful Wage & Benefit Survey tool for a number of years), but we were somewhat limited in how we presented the questions and the amount we could include.

Second, conducting the survey with AmericanHort helped us provide an expanded survey to our readers—many of whom are also their members. With Industry Insights' help, we were able to add new questions and expand on the ones we've always asked. The new data that's outside of the realm of what we normally report here every year is available from AmericanHort free for members.

With that said, there are a couple of things to call out based on the data. For the last couple of years, the story was about how wages were rising, either because of legislation that implemented minimum wage increases or to stay competitive in a high-demand worker's market. This year seems to be a focus on benefits. Of the respondents who answered, 72% said they offer health insurance to their full-time employees. Compare that to 10 years ago, when it was only 48%.

And employers realize its importance, too. Seventy percent said that health insurance was one of the benefits that their staff considers the most important. Only paid vacation was higher, at 80%.

Besides a robust benefits package, more employees are looking for jobs that offer them a more balanced work/life schedule. One of the new questions we asked was, "Which benefits do you use to attract and retain employees?" And the number one answer was a "Flexible work schedule" (45%), followed by "Added vacation days/PTO" (42%).

More employers are realizing that you have to not only offer competitive compensation with room for growth and perks like a flexible schedule, but you also have to provide an acceptable benefits package if you want to recruit and retain good employees.

This year, for the open-ended essay question, we asked: *What's a hiring mistake you'll never make again?* Here are some of the responses:

■ Never rehire an employee who quit under dubious circumstances.

■ Not checking references on positions other than seasonal. Also, putting newer employees on our health plan too quickly rather than forcing them to qualify by time.

■ Not doing a full background check on managerial positions.

■ Hiring someone we knew was not a good fit.

■ Taking the second-best option in an interview process when the first option turned down the offer. Better to re-interview and start over.

■ Not conducting an in-person interview.

■ We actually improved the recruiting process to incorporate lessons based on previous experiences. One lesson was that we were taking too long to fill a position because we wanted to have multiple candidates and choose the best. We learned that was a lose-lose situation because the “best” candidate gets an offer elsewhere in the meantime and we basically have to start from scratch. Another lesson was not having a clear, written and official role before posting the position. Now our process starts with an updated job description that our compensation manager reviews for budget reasons. We have a salary band, percentage of travel, must haves, preferred skills, etc.

■ Not believing our hiring survey results (we use predictive index and it's always right!).

■ Not training new managers on interview process and what red flags to look out for.

■ Coaxing into a position not applied for, but felt they would be better at it.

■ Not being clear about expectations.

■ Hiring friends.

■ Making quick decisions and not following up on references.

■ Hiring someone because they say they need a job.

■ Hiring with my heart instead of my head. Letting someone’s sad story influence my decision. It always burns me.

■ Trust your gut. If it doesn't feel right at the beginning, let the person go and rehire. Make sure your staff matches your culture and values, and make that a priority.

Production Size
Less than 100,000 sq. ft. – 29%
100,000 to 499,999 sq. ft. – 35%
500,000 sq. ft. or more – 35%

Region
East – 10%
West – 31%
Midwest – 26%
South – 33%

Customer Base
IGCs – 57%
Big box stores – 30%
Supermarkets/Small hardware stores – 37%
Florists – 25%
Landscapers – 51%
Other wholesalers – 43%
Direct to consumer (including online and catalog sales) – 48%
Fundraisers – 23%
Brokers – 21%
Municipalities – 5%

	Add Staff	Reduce Staff	Keep Staff the Same	I Don't Know
Staff Changes Made During **2023**	36%	15%	48%	1%
Staff Plans for **2024**	25%	3%	67%	6%
Previous Years **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%

Who responded to our survey?

Of the greenhouse grower respondents, 31% said they also have a nursery operation, 31% sell retail and 25% have a landscape division.

Staffing

How many people do you employ during peak season? Average full and part time is 200 with an average full time of 141.

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
All Respondents		
Crew Leader	$46,456	$22.33
Department Manager	$68,037	$32.71
Field Supervisor	$53,600	$25.77
General Labor	$37,210	$17.89
General Manager	$103,248	$49.64
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	$45,278	$21.77
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	$46,331	$22.27
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	$57,393	$27.59
Head Grower	$81,583	$39.22
Merchandise Manager	$55,230	$26.55
Merchandiser	$40,251	$19.35
Owner	$163,832	$78.77
Sales Manager	$95,601	$45.96
Section Grower	$60,157	$28.92
Truck Driver	$51,875	$24.94
Midwest		
Crew Leader	$46,249	$22.24
Department Manager	$64,836	$31.17
Field Supervisor	$54,636	$26.27
General Labor	$36,030	$17.32
General Manager	$122,594	$58.94
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	$46,785	$22.49
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	$40,248	$19.35
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	$58,971	$28.35
Head Grower	$81,804	$39.33
Merchandise Manager	$59,133	$28.43
Merchandiser	**	**
Owner	$103,200	$49.62
Sales Manager	$86,718	$41.69
Section Grower	$50,321	$24.19
Truck Driver	$48,302	$23.22
East		
Crew Leader	**	**
Department Manager	$64,752	$31.13
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	$39,798	$19.13
General Manager	**	**
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	**	**
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	$48,818	$23.47
Head Grower	$63,235	$30.40
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandiser	**	**
Owner	**	**
Sales Manager	**	**
Section Grower	$55,205	$26.54
Truck Driver	**	**

Compensation

Hourly Employees (U.S. only, average per hour)

Temp/Seasonal General Labor = $15.45

Part-Time General Labor = $14.45

Full-Time General Labor = $17.89

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
South		
Crew Leader	$41,882	$20.14
Department Manager	$72,443	$34.83
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	$32,920	$15.83
General Manager	$100,216	$48.18
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	$48,696	$23.41
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	$81,759	$39.31
Merchandise Manager	$50,373	$24.22
Merchandiser	**	**
Owner	$233,607	$112.31
Sales Manager	$109,048	$52.43
Section Grower	$67,833	$32.61
Truck Driver	$56,097	$26.97
West		
Crew Leader	$50,950	$24.50
Department Manager	$71,089	$34.18
Field Supervisor	$43,264	$20.80
General Labor	$40,265	$19.36
General Manager	$92,327	$44.39
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	**	**
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	**	**
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	$85,801	$41.25
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandiser	**	**
Owner	**	**
Sales Manager	$100,475	$48.31
Section Grower	$62,646	$30.12
Truck Driver	$50,773	$24.41

Job	Average Salary	Average Hourly
Between 100,000 to 500,000 sq. ft.		
Crew Leader	$40,087	$19.27
Department Manager	$75,530	$36.31
Field Supervisor	**	**
General Labor	$33,961	$16.33
General Manager	**	**
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	$42,187	$20.28
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	**	**
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	**	**
Head Grower	$74,896	$36.01
Merchandise Manager	**	**
Merchandiser	**	**
Owner	**	**
Sales Manager	**	**
Section Grower	**	**
Truck Driver	$44,616	$21.45
Over 500,000 sq. ft.		
Crew Leader	$45,724	$21.98
Department Manager	$64,353	$30.94
Field Supervisor	$55,337	$26.60
General Labor	$35,542	$17.09
General Manager	$111,940	$53.82
Grower 2nd level (3 to 5 years)	$48,778	$23.45
Grower Junior level (0 to 2 years)	$46,918	$22.56
Grower Senior level (6+ years)	$58,804	$28.27
Head Grower	$92,311	$44.38
Merchandise Manager	$52,092	$25.04
Merchandiser	$39,367	$18.93
Owner	$261,000	$125.48
Sales Manager	$99,619	$47.89
Section Grower	$49,601	$23.85
Truck Driver	$53,701	$25.82

Healthcare & Other Benefits

Which benefits do you currently offer your employees?

	Full Time	Part Time	Seasonal
Health/Medical Insurance	72%	15%	14%
Dental Insurance	58%	10%	9%
Life Insurance	54%	13%	9%
Sick Leave	72%	44%	42%
Disability Insurance	46%	10%	7%
401(k)	67%	29%	12%
Pension	7%	0%	0%
Annual Bonus	58%	46%	30%
Paid Vacation	94%	40%	21%
Paid Holidays	89%	40%	26%
Employee Discount	65%	75%	74%
Other	13%	10%	7%

Benefits offered in 2013

Health/Medical Insurance	48%	6%	
Dental Insurance	27%	3%	
Life Insurance	22%	3%	
Sick Leave	37%	7%	
Disability Insurance	21%	5%	
401(k)	36%	8%	
Pension	9%	2%	
Annual Bonus	48%	23%	
Paid Vacation	73%	15%	
Paid Holidays	63%	17%	
Employee Discount	**	**	
Other	9%	7%	

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

Health/Medical insurance	70%	14%	13%
Dental Insurance	18%	5%	0%
Life Insurance	3%	0%	0%
Sick Leave	29%	38%	50%
Disability Insurance	3%	0%	0%
401(k)	32%	3%	0%
Pension	5%	0%	0%
Annual Bonus	36%	49%	100%
Paid Vacation	80%	46%	25%
Paid Holidays	45%	46%	25%
Employee Discount	18%	38%	63%
Other	2%	8%	0%

Which benefits do you use to attract and retain employees?

Above market salaries	39%	32%	31%
Added medical benefits	20%	0%	2%
Added vacation days/PTO	42%	11%	7%
Flexible work schedule	45%	45%	33%
Telecommuting	8%	2%	0%
Incentive compensation	15%	6%	4%
Mentoring program	9%	4%	4%
Profit sharing	17%	11%	9%
Tuition reimbursement	25%	6%	4%
Retention bonus	9%	4%	11%
Signing bonus	5%	2%	2%
Childcare services/reimbursement	0%	0%	0%
Stock options	0%	0%	0%
Fuel allowance	5%	2%	0%
Other	8%	6%	7%
We are doing nothing to attract or retain employees	12%	23%	24%