GROWERTALKS

Features

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Tour Time at the 2024 Plug & Cutting Conference

Bill Calkins



Most greenhouse professionals would agree that visiting innovative operations during industry tours can be one of the best ways to see new ideas in action and pick up best practices to bring back to their own business. This year's AmericanHort Plug & Cutting Conference scheduled for September 23-25 in Orlando, Florida, offers just this type of opportunity.

On the first day of the conference (Monday, September 23), two Experiential Greenhouse Production Tours are offered and registration is open. With limited space on the tours, now is the time to sign up. The $195 registration fee for either tour includes transportation to the sites, as well as lunch.

Benefit of tour stops: Learn industry best practices and gain new ideas for your business by seeing up close how other operations handle certain tasks, processes and procedures. You'll also have plenty of opportunities to network with peers and meet new people—which is often when the true application of what you see starts to evolve into action plans.

This year's tour stops include a Costa Farms location, Knox Horticulture, AG2TC and Agri-Starts. These businesses cover a diverse range of horticultural segments, including indoor plants, bedding plants, tissue culture production and propagation, and much more. Here's a taste of what you'll see on the tour:

AG2TC



According to team members, attendees can expect to see their onsite laboratory where experts are working on cultures. AG2 specializes in tropical plants and currently has more than 150 varieties in production. While touring the facilities, you'll see tissue culture processes from Stage 1 in the lab all the way through to Stage 4 in the greenhouse. AG2 covers 12 acres—including labs, offices and greenhouse space.

Agri-Starts, Inc.

Agri-Starts, Inc. is a plant tissue culture young plant company established in Apopka, Florida, in 1984 by Randy Strode. Specializing in propagation of tropical foliage, edibles and natives, as well as many other specialty crops and projects, you'll find plenty of ideas to take home to your own production. The Agri-Starts team says you can expect to see a state-of-the-art plant tissue culture laboratory and a young plant production greenhouse with a cutting-edge ebb-and-flood recirculating irrigation system. Watch for their ISO Cutting Planter 2500, which automates the sticking process of select tissue culture plantlets.

Costa Farms

This 60-year-old family-run company started on just 30 acres when founder Jose Costa Sr. grew tomatoes and calamondin citrus. Costa now grows more than 1,500 varieties on 5,200 acres. The company has more than 10 ranges of greenhouses in Apopka, where they grow most of the plants in the Exotic Angel Plants collection, including popular varieties like hoya and English ivy. Many of these greenhouses house mother plants used in propagation. Costa distributes to more than 20,000 retail locations in North America and prides itself on bringing new and innovative products to the market. On the tour, you'll see innovative production practices in action that offer customers and suppliers an objective opportunity to evaluate new genetics and technologies. As they say, Costa Farms isn't just creating plants that look better, but making the end consumer more successful.

Knox Horticulture

An established second-generation family-run business started in 1962, Knox Horticulture produces a full line of young plants for the greenhouse industry, as well as 4-in. finished plants for landscapes and local theme parks. Each year, they grow more than 150 million plugs and liners in over 700,000 sq. ft. of high-tech greenhouses. You'll see this in person and have an opportunity to learn how the company has evolved to now produce more than 5,000 varieties of plants, from alyssum to zinnia. Knox has a huge young plant program, but is also a major wholesale grower of finished plants for landscape companies and theme parks in Florida. **GT**

***Register now* for the premier event for young plant producers and growers from across the country. This conference is the place to learn the newest and best strategies, technologies and techniques in the world of plugs and cuttings.**