

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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“Perfectly in the Middle of Nowhere”

Jennifer Zurko



That's how Mike Gooder describes the rural location of his wholesale business Plantpeddler—which, to be fair, IS in the middle of nowhere.

Cresco, Iowa, may be out there, but that didn't matter to the close to 400 people who attended Plantpeddler's 21st annual Variety Day Open House in early August. It was the highest attendance number they've seen in that time, which tracks with how other events have been trending all year. Since January, every industry event and trade show in North America (national and regional) has seen record attendance.

I asked Mike why he thought this was. He sat back, paused, and said, “That's a good question.”

He thinks that more people are going out and attending events because they need the moral support, especially in areas where Spring 2024 wasn't great. Connecting with like-minded people who can offer advice and a shoulder to lean on helps you get through the hard times and move forward.

“A lot of people did not have a stellar season [this year], but this is an industry that has a strong support system, that supports each other,” said Mike. “Maybe we're all trying to be better together. We're all going through the same challenges.”

The weather provided a beautiful backdrop for people to chit-chat, network and peruse the 1,500 different vegetative varieties in Plantpeddler's trial (700 in hanging baskets, 800 in containers). There's a different theme every year and this year had two—the young plant supply chain and disease management—so there were a handful of speakers on hand to present on both topics.

Mike said the Plantpeddler team works hard to provide a day that attendees feel gives them value, opportunities to gain more knowledge or learn something new, and to have fun. When you're in the middle of nowhere, you gotta make it worth it, and Mike doesn't take that for granted.

“I feel very honored that people come from far away to be here,” he said. “I love bringing people together and I have an amazing team. I'm super fortunate to have built a great company out here. It's a blessing.” **GT**