

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Plugs (and Poinsettias) at the Plug & Cutting Conference

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Steve Mullen (at top of picture), long-time general manager at Knox Horticulture in Winter Garden, Florida, describes the basics of Knox's plug and liner production strategies to a Plug & Cutting Conference tour group (fearlessly led by yours truly). September is not a key young plant time for Knox, as you can see from the many poinsettias in the greenhouse (115,000, actually). But at 150 million plugs per year, Knox is a major supplier of young plants to the Florida and southeast U.S. markets.

Three busloads of more than 150 greenhouse industry professionals visited a selection of tour stops during the pre-conference tour, including tissue culture labs AG2 and Agri-Starts, foliage producer Costa Farms (one of their Exotic Angel plant production facilities), tropical young plant producer Deroose Plants, and plug and finished plant grower Knox Horticulture, giving attendees a broad look at a range of production facilities and techniques in Central Florida.

Said one tour attendee, "We enjoyed seeing the tissue culture facilities and how successful they are in what they do. We sent two members of our team and I feel we both took ideas away that we can implement soon, if not today!"

The Plug & Cutting Conference, held September 23-25, drew more than 300 plug growers and allied suppliers to Orlando to learn the newest and best strategies, technologies and techniques in young plant propagation. There were multiple educational tracks, and equally important, great networking opportunities over the three days of the event.

Bill Calkins, representing Ball Seed's Tech on Demand and GrowerTalks, attended six of the educational sessions and moderated another. He said the sessions were "laser-focused," with expert speakers and panelists represented, leading greenhouses, universities, independent researchers and suppliers, "all with the goal of optimizing production and reducing risk when growing high-value crops."

If you missed the conference, you can still gain from the education. At the AmericanHort website, you can find the Plug & Cutting On-Demand Package, which includes access to the 14 recorded webinars and four webinars presented in Spanish. **GT**