

# GROWERTALKS

## Inside Look

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## Using Change for the Better

*Jennifer Zurko*



**JENNIFER ZURKO**

As I'm writing this at my kitchen island, the Chicago seasons are changing from a lovely fall to what will almost certainly be a dreaded winter.

Well, I don't really know what winter will be like, but I was born and raised here. Chicagoans have learned to keep their hopes low when it comes to weather. Plus, it's not just the actual seasons that change, but the weather can change multiple times within the same season. This past fall saw some days as high as 80F, dropping to the 40s almost within 24 hours. This is why we walk around in shorts, but also sweatshirts. And have atmospheric-pressure-induced sinus headaches.

So we're used to change and we adapt to it. (But not without some complaining. It's the Midwest way.)

This year has brought a lot of change—for me (bad and good), for Ball Publishing (pretty good) and for the industry (depends who you ask). But the key to getting through change is figuring out how to adapt to it.

This kept going through my mind as I was interviewing the three fathers and three sons that make up the third and fourth generations of George Sant & Sons Greenhouses for this month's cover profile. Working for Ball for 20 years, I knew about the Sants, but had never met most of them. A video project Ball Seed hired us to do earlier this year provided the opportunity for me to meet all of them and spend some time at their operation.

Sant is a business with a long-standing history in their local suburban community outside of Toronto, but yet, they have a modern operation. Over almost eight decades, they've grown vegetables and then flowers for local garden centers and landscapers. And since the early 1990s, they've been one of the key players in young plant production, establishing themselves as Ball Seed's main supplier in Canada.

It wasn't just luck that made them so successful for so many years; there was a lot of hard work and some very lean times. But being willing to change and pivot, and to take risks on new investments and innovations, helped them achieve that success.

I can complain about Chicago's weather all day long, but then I think about those of you in the southeastern part of the U.S. and what you've had to go through with two hurricanes and a bunch of tornadoes and remember to count my blessings. Climate change has provided some new trends with regard to insuring your business that you should keep in mind.

The responses to our essay question for our 29th annual Salary & Benefits Survey—in partnership with AmericanHort for the second year—show that one of the many attributes employers look for in an ideal candidate is flexibility and adapting to change. Wages seem to be holding steady, but a new question asking about participation in the H-2A and H-2B seasonal workforce programs reminds us that more and more of you are turning to them to find labor. And with what some call a recent “change election” that also brings a lot of uncertainty, many of you may have to find new ways to adapt.

And our intrepid friend and columnist Art Parkerson found himself changing his mind on the importance and necessity of taking a mental health day.

Maybe it’s because I’m writing this during the passing of the seasons and right after a major election, but I feel in my gut that there are even more changes ahead that we’ll all have to face. Some good, some bad—hopefully, more of the former—but to get through those changes we have to be willing to accept them and then figure out the best way to adapt. And if adapting isn’t good enough or the right thing to do, we have to have the courage to try and change it ourselves. **GT**