

# GROWERTALKS

## Inside Look

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### Bits & Morsels

*Jennifer Zurko*



**JENNIFER ZURKO**

When you've been covering this industry for a while, people think you know things.

Well ... it's true that I do know a lot of things. Nothing that will cure cancer or bring world peace. Knowing things doesn't make me the smartest person in the room. It just makes me the one that people want to chat with and it's my brain they want to pick.

The way I get to know things is I'm an information sponge—I absorb every piece of intel I learn. I wouldn't say "gossip" because that's a nasty word that implies I believe all the rumors and pass them along without any fact-checking. I think of it as little tidbits to put away to save for later. Kinda like the food that finds its way into Mr.

Twit's beard in Roald Dahl's "The Twits"—there are "hundreds of bits" so there's always "a tasty morsel here and there to nibble on."

Plus, people just come up to me and tell me stuff. That comes from years of working on nurturing all of the relationships I've built with all of you. And building that trust is why people come to me with, "Did you hear ...?" and "Do you know about ...?"—understanding that I'm not gonna run out and publish it.

Another way I get intel is by being very observant. This is a skill that all journalists should have and most don't. I'm not saying I'm the best observer—but I do notice when you got a haircut or are wearing new shoes or if there's a spider in the corner of the room. Being observant is just being a nosybody, but not as obvious.

So when people know you know things, they also ask for your opinion. During and after MANTS in January, I was asked multiple times for my take on "the vibe" of the show and the folks walking the aisles. I always have to pause to think about it a bit the first time, but something usually pops in my head right away. This year, I think there was a pattern of "Thank heavens 2024 is over."

A lot of you would like to pretend that 2024 never happened. Many growers and retailers would say that business last year was less than stellar. The weather in many parts of the country made sure of that.

But another thing I noticed last year was how many people had challenges in their personal lives, too. I can't tell you how many times readers and industry friends told me about the death of a beloved family member, having serious medical issues, struggling to care for aging parents and the ending of relationships. I can certainly relate to that on many levels.

So good riddance, 2024! We're glad you're gone.

But now it's time to dig in and get ourselves ready for what 2025 will bring. As I write this, a Polar Vortex is about to descend on Chicagoland and many parts of the country, so we're hearing about frozen cuttings and energy costs to heat greenhouses. As with every year, there are things like this we have no control over, but there are some things we can actively do to avoid pitfalls.

One of those things is managing pests. February is when we focus solely on the prevention and control of insects and diseases that can add to your production headaches, so we've got lots of bits and morsels for you to chew on or save for later if you run into any problems.

For those of you who use biological predators to keep insect populations down, there's info on how to make sure your biological control agents have arrived at your door alive and well. And sticking with the bios theme, how *Amblydromalus limonicus* can keep the newest greenhouse enemy, *Thrips parvispinus*, at bay.

For a preventative measure that's been proven in many studies, try dipping your cuttings before transplant. Read the piece based off of Rose Buitenhuis' talk at the last Plug & Cutting Conference.

And mites seem to be the scourge of the season—at least so far. Read about scouting and control of bulb mites and broad mites.

I was just thinking that I've collected so many bits and morsels of information over the years that, if they were pieces of food I kept in my beard, it would force Mr. Twit into such a fit of jealousy that he would devise a clever—and somewhat stupid—way to exact revenge on me. That would make for a very entertaining book. **GT**