

# GROWERTALKS

## GT in Brief

9/30/2025

## A Second Spring

Jennifer Zurko



About 30,000 mums were basking in the sun at Countryside Flower Shop, Nursery & Garden Center in Elburn, Illinois, on a beautiful day in early September. Eight-five percent of them were promised to Countryside's fundraiser customers, with the rest reserved for both of their retail locations (the other one is in Crystal Lake, Illinois).

And whatever your personal feelings toward mums are, people are still buying them. Countryside's owners, Johannes "JP" Pieterse and his wife Melissa, said that their garden center customers do ask for them every year, and whatever they put out in the store they sell the

same day.

It was a hot and humid summer in Chicagoland, so I asked JP and head grower Brian Moxley if that affected the early stages of their mum production. Yes, it was hot, they said, but there was a lot of rain, too, and that causes more of a headache than the temperature. But it wasn't anything they couldn't handle.

"You adjust with the weather and when there's a problem, the mum tells you," said Brian.

Countryside's mum crop is offered mainly as 9-in. pots, with some 4 and 6 in. Melissa said yellow is the most popular, but they do grow multiple varieties within a range of five colors. And they offer much more for fall beyond mums—pansies, obviously, but also ornamental kale and peppers, plus millet and marigolds. They also have pre-planted fall containers in a variety of sizes and price points.



JP and Melissa said that they'll be expanding their mum production over the next five years.

From left to right: Autumn, Cameron, Melissa and JP—the family that owns Countryside Flower Shop, Nursery & Garden Center.

"JP always calls the fall our 'second spring,'" said Melissa. JP explained it's because "the most growth will be in the fall, so this time of year is super

important for us.”

Because Chicago weather doesn’t ease into anything, we went from weeks of heat to cool fall weather in a matter of days. And since Labor Day was on September 1 this year, JP said that people started shopping for fall earlier.

Which also means they haven’t had much of a break. Before the spring selling season ends, they’re planting mum cuttings. And as they were placing the mums you see here outside, the poinsettias were coming in.

JP is a regular participant in Chris Beytes’ annual spring survey (which he publishes in his *Acres Online* newsletter), but now that spring is fully in the rear-view mirror, I asked him how it was.

“We had a very good year,” JP said, explaining that they’ve bounced back since the downturn after the COVID bump. “And we’ve made a lot of good changes.”

One of those changes is that JP is now the sole owner of both Countryside locations along with Melissa after his previous business partner left to pursue other endeavors. Their son Cameron and daughter Autumn have also recently come into the business full time.

“We’ve been really pushing that we’re family owned, with new management and leadership,” said JP. **GT**