

GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

10/31/2025

The Basics to Finding New Inspiration

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I've been at this writing/journalism thing for a long time, and now that I'm in the middle of my career (middle-end ...? Let's not think about that ...) I wonder if I've let myself go stale.

Like a cracker that's no longer crunchy. Like an avocado that's become mushy. Like bread that looks like a science experiment.

Well, maybe that's extreme, but I've been thinking about it a lot lately. Do the words ever just ... run out? How many more years do I have until that happens?

But just like gray hair and wrinkles, I refuse to let that happen gracefully. As I have with Italian hair color and fancy face moisturizer, I need to find the tools to combat the writing staleness. And that means finding new inspiration.

Recently, I've found it by getting back to the basics. I'm at that point where young aspiring journalists and writers are coming to me for advice and to ask me questions. A couple of Ball's interns reached out to me this past summer to pick my brain and I found it a weird spot to be in. My first thought is that I don't know how much I can help them. But then we started talking and I felt like I was actually imparting some wisdom. I started at the beginning, when I was learning the basics, and the lessons I've learned since then. I get the warm fuzzies by helping someone, while also remembering what it was like looking at the writing world with fresh eyes.

We have to keep this in mind with the things we've been doing over and over again for a long time, like transplanting plugs and liners. How long have you and your staff been doing that every year? You may be able to do it in your sleep, but do you have newer staff that needs to be trained or current employees (or you) that could use a refresher?

Another basic part of running a business (so I'm told) is the art of cost accounting. You may have been keeping the books since the beginning—or even have an accountant you trust implicitly—but it's never a bad idea to get back to the basics to make sure that you're making the right decisions so you can be as profitable as possible. Bill Calkins sat down with Ball Seed's Senior Business Analyst Stephen Steiner to learn how he helps growers find opportunities with basic cost accounting practices. If you'd rather listen than read, Bill recorded his conversation with Stephen, which you can find on the Tech On Demand podcast feed on Spotify, Apple or wherever you get your podcasts.

You can also get some basic info on the ideal irrigation run time for containers and avoiding purpling of cuttings while growing under LEDs, plus refreshers on common poinsettia problems and rust diseases that you can remember for next year.

Besides illuminating young professionals, I've also found inspiration by reading what other writers write. And it hasn't just been in books—I highly recommend downloading the Substack app. You can search for your favorite (or new to you) authors, journalists and artists and filter posts based on a wide range of interests (and avoid the cranks and nutjobs who frequent and ruin social media). Many of today's writers have a Substack page where they blog, journal and write essays. Some even write poetry. It's a nice break from the regular and you can find some great inspiration. **GT**