

# GROWERTALKS

## GT in Brief

11/28/2025

## Back in Business

*Chris Beytes*



If this aerial photo of Brad's Bedding in Fort Pierce, Florida, makes the place look brand new that's because it pretty much is brand new, completely rebuilt one year after a tornado spawned by Hurricane Milton (which, ironically was 75 miles away) ripped across the property on October 9, 2024. We reported the bad news of the destruction then and felt obliged to report the good news of the recovery. So we visited owner Brad Bethurem and his son, Bradley, in early November on a busy poinsettia and bedding plant shipping day to check it out. The color you see below is primarily poinsettias, geraniums and the SunPatiens Brad's is

known for.

**The tornado of October 9, 2024, flattened much of Brad's Bedding's 25-acre Fort Pierce nursery. Photos: Brad Bethurem**

Brad, who was a bit frazzled in 2024, is a fair bit happier today, what with being up and running, and much of it paid for by crop insurance, the Hurricane Insurance Program (HIP-WI, which pays the crop insurance deductible) and a zero-interest government loan.

"The crop insurance has saved me," he said. "Those policies are there for a reason. If you don't do it, you're a fool, when you have this kind of investment."

Plus, thankfully, he had his unscathed Delray Beach location to keep customers supplied with color.

Meanwhile, 75 miles north up I-95, the cleanup effort was monumental. Brad lost hundreds of thousands of 4.5-in. annuals and 75,000 poinsettias, plus 25 acres of plastic, shadecloth, metal, irrigation and all the rest.

"Where do you begin—that's the problem," he said. "We had plastic and shade everywhere ... it was in our trees ... it took us a month because it was so wrapped up and twisted up in them."



Fortunately, Brad had recently signed up for the H-2A guest worker program and his first employees had arrived in August. They proved invaluable, working nonstop, filling dozens of 40-yard Dumpsters with debris, and getting a shadehouse up and running by December, which they filled with fern baskets for some quick cashflow. Brad lived onsite nearly every day for weeks, he said—he has five bedrooms, plus facilities in the office for himself and staff from his Delray Beach location to save on hotel or rental costs.

Brad's son, Bradley, shows off a 6.5-in. Christmas Magic, one of their key varieties. This poinsettia and hundreds more like it were headed to Disney the next day. Photo: Chris Beytes

Taking advantage of the chance to upgrade during the rebuild, Brad added Wire Products' wire nursery benches to all the shadehouses to get the plants off the ground. The new propagation greenhouse, from Beijing Sunrise Greentech, is 2 ft. taller than the previous one, with a larger loading area up front, a retractable shade curtain, and fan-and-pad cooling.

Brad admits that after the storm he had offers from developers, but he chose to rebuild. Sales are strong (up 10% a year or more), and demand from his landscape and IGC customers remains strong.

"This whole thing with the hurricane has probably taken a few years off my life," he said with a smile. "But you're either growing or you're dying ... I don't know who came up with that ..." **GT**