

GROWERTALKS

Features

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The Future of AFE Research Begins With You!

Laura Barth



In July, I had the opportunity to represent AFE at Ball's Customer Days in beautiful (and hot!) West Chicago. Beyond connecting with growers and enjoying the gardens, a highlight of my trip was browsing through old *GrowerTalks* issues—some dating back to the 1940s. It was fascinating to see the progress our industry has made, but also how certain challenges resurface in new forms. Like the December 1973 article “Let’s Get Rid of

Soil,” which described representatives from Jiffy and Premier Peat Moss presenting their “best cases” for using peat-lite mixes as alternatives to field soil. It sounded similar to today’s discussions that focus on alternatives to peat.

Or the April 1972 feature “Man’s Battle with the Insect,” which opened with: “What was once the routine use of chemicals to control insects has turned into a pitched battle between the environmentalists and the chemical companies.” Reading those words was telling of how our industry’s challenges—and solutions—evolve over time.

Fittingly, AFE was featured in the July 2025 issue of *GrowerTalks* highlighting decades of our funded research that helped growers tackle many challenges described in those old articles. It’s a reminder that while issues evolve, solutions continue to emerge through industry-driven science. The past decade has brought rapid change: new pests and diseases, rising input costs, tighter regulations, labor shortages, and shifting consumer expectations. How do we keep pace while protecting your bottom line?

Your voice matters!

AFE’s research begins with you! You share your challenges, we set priorities, top scientists propose solutions and the projects that address the most pressing needs get funded after thorough expert reviews. Then we share those results back with the industry. However, this cycle only works if you’re part of it.

We need your help identifying the biggest industry challenges. What keeps you up at night? What production issues cost you the most? What innovations would make your operation more sustainable or efficient? [Go to AFE's website](#) to tell us what research we should be funding.



Your support matters!

Supporting AFE means investing in your own success. It means funding solutions that improve production and make the industry more competitive. Even when federal funding for research programs is uncertain, AFE funding remains constant. Whether you can donate \$200 or \$1,000, your support will move our industry forward. Reading the old *GrowerTalks* articles was a powerful reminder that those who came before us have brought us to where we are now and now we have the chance to support the future! You can help fund the answers our industry needs at endowment.org/donate.

Together, we grow stronger

If you're not already using AFE's grower resources, now is the time to start. We provide free resources to help you save time, cut costs and stay ahead of persistent challenges. Just visit endowment.org/growers.

The future of floriculture depends on research, but research depends on you. By working together, sharing knowledge and funding targeted research, we can ensure that both growers and plants flourish in the years ahead. AFE is committed to being your partner in that journey, but we need your input. We need your support. And together, we can make sure the most important priorities receive the funding they deserve. **GT**

Laura Barth is Research Coordinator for the American Floral Endowment.