GROWERTALKS

Guest Column

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Bridging Research & Practice

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As the Industry Division Vice President for the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS), I'm proud to share that the society will bring to GrowerTalks readers a new series of articles adapted from their journal publications that presents academic horticultural research directly to industry professionals. This initiative represents a step forward in ASHS' ongoing mission to strengthen the vital connection between academia and industry. They recognize that groundbreaking research can only reach its full potential when it effectively translates from theory to practice. This knowledge exchange aims to accelerate innovation and advance the entire horticulture community.

The strength of our industry lies in its ability to adapt and innovate. By creating this direct channel between researchers and industry professionals, it facilitates faster adoption of new technologies and methods while ensuring that academic research remains aligned with industry needs.

The critical value of research collaboration

The relationship between industry and academic research has never been more crucial. As our industry faces complex challenges—from climate change to evolving consumer preferences—the synthesis of academic rigor and practical application becomes increasingly vital. These collaborations create a powerful synergy: academic institutions provide deep scientific expertise and research infrastructure, while industry partners offer real-world insights, commercial perspective and the ability to scale solutions rapidly.

Research collaborations drive innovation through shared resources, diverse perspectives and combined expertise. When academic researchers and industry professionals work together, they create solutions that are both scientifically sound and commercially viable. This partnership model has already led to breakthrough developments in areas like sustainable production methods, disease resistance breeding and resource-efficient growing systems.

Investment in horticultural research yields returns that extend far beyond immediate commercial applications. Quality research provides the foundation for evidence-based decision-making, risk reduction and long-term industry advancement. While the costs of research can be substantial, the potential returns—whether in improved productivity, reduced inputs or new market opportunities—often far exceed the initial investment. Furthermore, research collaboration helps distribute these costs while maximizing the benefit to all stakeholders.

There are several ways to support academic research in horticulture: direct work with academics, and donating to organizations like the American Floral Endowment (AFE), the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers (ASCFG) Research Foundation, Horticulture Research Institute (HRI), Floriculture Research Alliance (FRA) and

several other organizations that provide funding to academics to do valuable research on behalf of the industry.

Strengthening industry/academic collaboration

For decades, ASHS has served as the premier platform for horticultural science, fostering excellence in research, education and extension. Founded in 1903, ASHS serves as the premier professional society for horticultural science for both academics and industry professionals. Visit ashs.org to explore membership benefits, including educational and networking opportunities, professional development resources, and access to the Career and Collaboration Centers. ASHS' peer-reviewed journals are always open-access. (The articles featured for this series will be from HortTechnology and HortScience.)

This series represents more than just a collection of research summaries; it serves as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue between industry professionals and researchers. Each article will include:

- Clear explanations of practical applications
- Implementation considerations for commercial settings
- Contact information for further collaboration, feedback and input
- The articles will feature contributions from a range of researchers, including established scientists, early career professionals and graduate students. By providing emerging professionals with a platform to share their findings, we're not only helping to disseminate valuable research, but also fostering the next generation of horticultural leaders. Readers can expect to encounter:
- Innovative production techniques
- Technology applications in commercial horticulture
- And so much more!

A personal perspective: From lab to market

As someone who's navigated both the academic and commercial aspects of horticulture, I've gained a unique perspective on the value of this collaboration. My journey from Ph.D. scientist to head of marketing has shown me how critical it is to bridge the gap between scientific discovery and market application. In my current role, I see daily how research findings can transform into tangible products and solutions that benefit growers, retailers and, ultimately, consumers.

The most successful innovations I've witnessed have emerged from the intersection of scientific methodology and market-driven needs. When we align academic expertise with industry insights, we create solutions that are not only scientifically valid, but also commercially viable and practically implementable. This dual perspective has taught me that the most impactful research isn't just about publishing papers—it's about creating real-world solutions that advance our industry.

The future of horticulture depends on our ability to foster these collaborative relationships, translate research into practice and maintain open channels of communication between academia and industry. Through initiatives like this article series, we're not just sharing information—we're building the foundation for the next generation of horticultural innovation.

Stay tuned for our inaugural article next month and join us in this exciting chapter of industry-academic collaboration. Together, we can ensure that scientific research translates into practical solutions for the challenges facing modern horticulture. **GT**

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