GROWERTALKS

Inside Look

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The Past, Very Much Like the Present

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I've been really into historical documentaries lately. And I'm not too picky on the topic—wars, politics, ancient civilizations, Greek mythology, nature, sports, celebrities, archeology, art, music—as long as it looks relatively interesting, I'll watch it.

But that's because I'm already a history buff. If I could have stayed in college longer I would have added it as another minor. Unfortunately, Northern Illinois University (and my mother) felt I was educated enough and that it was time to venture out into the real world. So, instead, I satiate my love for history with non-fiction books and documentaries.

That's why I love looking through old issues of *GrowerTalks*. It makes me really appreciate how far this publication has come and how much the industry has changed. Here's a sampling of some past event coverage (I kept the original spelling, grammar and punctuation):

February 1941 (before it was called OFA and then Cultivate it was The Ohio Short Course), George J. Ball wrote: "Notwithstanding the fact that it hurts one's pride a bit to do so, it is interesting to speculate on just why this event should continue unremittingly to be the outstanding one of its kind in the middlewest. ... Well known growers from all sections of the land are here giving and receiving of the wealth of information that is so freely and informally passed along."

March 1950, the keynote of the Short Course asked the attendees: "'What can we do to sell all these flowers we're growing?' How appropriate! The problem was approached quite realistically with talks on selling co-ops, sales promotion ideas, ideas on how to move flowers by top authorities in each branch of the trade."

From the Short Course in 1966: "The increasing interest in, and use of, CO_2 as an additive to greenhouse atmosphere has of course given rise to the introduction and sale of not only bottled CO_2, but several competing devices to generate this gas on the greenhouse premises."

In 1974, Vic Ball wrote: "'OSU' '74 was again great. Actually, a bit 'greater.' Attendance was up some over '73. Roughly 1100 total. A strong 600 real-live growers. ... As we said before, it's comparing notes with the other 600 growers that to us is the real payoff in attending such a meeting."

Over 10 years later, in 1985, Vic wrote: “In recent years, Ohio has been reaching out to appeal to the retail flower shop owner, (design school and all!) plus interior plantscaping and a strong retail garden center program.”

In September 1995, after Vic attended the Super Floral Show: “It was a whale of a show! ... Of special interest to us were the pot plant displays. They were large, plants were well displayed and booths often showed a wealth of unusual crops. We’re not just poinsettias and chrysanthemums anymore!”

Looking through those pages also shows how much has stayed the same. We still provide the latest research data and production information on everything from young plant production to pest management to climate control and lighting. We still visit growers and garden centers all around the country (and sometimes the world). And we still cover industry events, reporting on the new products we saw, the new information we learned and the current vibes percolating throughout the trade show aisles.

This month, we’ve got coverage from three of the early winter trade shows—MANTS, TPIE and IPM Essen. Jen Polanz and Chris Beytes did excellent work on not only finding new plants and products, but also gauging the current mood.

Another reason I went with the history theme in this month’s column is because we have the first in a series of articles delving into the history of growing media from our substrates expert and friend Dr. Brian E. Jackson from North Carolina State University. Brian starts with looking at what growers were using for media between the 1900s and 1950s, with help from some old sources (including back issues of *GrowerTalks*!).

But we don’t just have information relating to the past, but also the present! Learn about the new era of diagnosing plant nutrition, how you can incorporate woodies into your finished containers and how to avoid a Phytophthora outbreak on your spring vinca crop.

In Brian’s article, he mentions what his grandpa Marvin, a tobacco farmer (and turns out, very wise man), used to say, “Boy, how do you know where you are going if you do not know where you came from?” I guess that’s why I like history so much—it provides you the opportunity to learn from it and to appreciate how far we’ve come. The key is to remembering and putting those lessons into practice. **GT**