GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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AmericanHort Board of Directors Names Lionel van der Walt President and CEO

Jennifer Zurko

AmericanHort's Board of Directors announced the appointment of Lionel van der Walt as its new President and Chief Executive Officer, effective June 2, 2026. He will succeed Ken Fisher, who announced last fall his plans to depart in May 2026 after 10 years with the organization.

Lionel brings more than 20 years of executive leadership experience driving growth and transformation across various sectors, including high-tech startups and international non-profit associations. Known for a strategic, collaborative leadership style, he brings a unique blend of operational expertise and a proven track record of delivering exceptional value to member-driven organizations.

"After a comprehensive national search, we are confident that Lionel van der Walt is the right leader to guide AmericanHort into its next chapter," said Kent Fullmer, Chair of the AmericanHort Board of Directors. "His work experience, global perspective and his collaborative style will be instrumental as AmericanHort continues to advocate for and support the horticulture industry."

Prior to joining AmericanHort, Lionel served as Chief Commercial Officer of Nallian, a technology company specializing in data-sharing solutions for the global air cargo industry. Additionally, he's served as CEO and Executive Vice President of the International Institute of Building Enclosure Consultants (IIBEC) and served as President of Cargo Network Services (CNS), a subsidiary of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

In addition to these roles, Lionel has served on various industry and community boards, including the Cristo Rey Network Workforce Advisory Task Force and the Smart Supply Chain Alliance Advisory Board. He holds a Master's in Business Administration from Milpark Business School in South Africa, completed the Certificate Program in Association Management from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) and has served as an officer in the South African Air Force.

"It is a true honor to be selected to lead AmericanHort at such a pivotal time for the green industry. I have deep respect for the organization's mission and the vital role our members play in both the economy and our communities," Lionel said. "This industry is built on a foundation of passion and hard work, and it is a privilege to serve the businesses that represent the heart of horticulture. I look forward to listening to our members and working together to build upon the association's strong legacy of advocacy and growth."

According to AmericanHort, Lionel’s career is defined by a global perspective, having lived and worked in South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. Having grown up in the farming communities of South Africa, where his family continues to own and operate farms, he developed an early appreciation for agriculture. **GT**