

Bonnie's New HQ; Ball's New JV; Brits in a Lockdown



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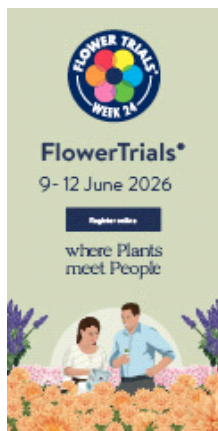
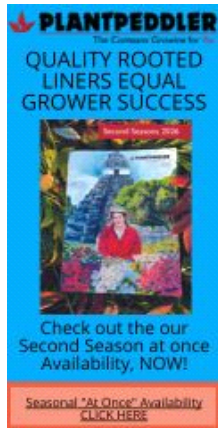
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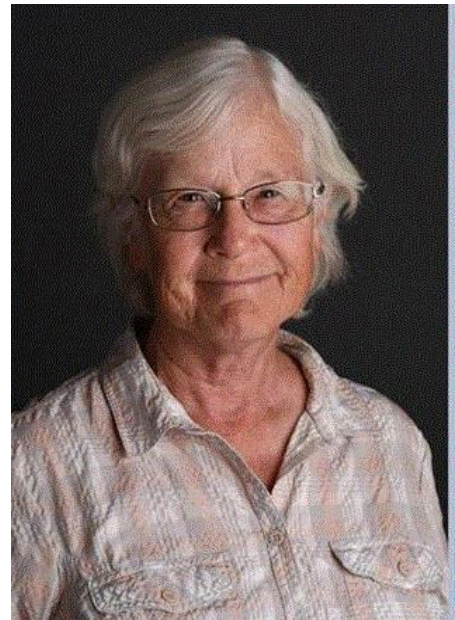
DÜMMEN ORANGE.

VIEW our **NEW ANNUALS CATALOG!**

Congratulations to Dr. Ellen Leue!



Congratulations to long-time PanAmerican Seed breeder Ellen Leue for being awarded the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS) 2020 Distinguished Industry Achievement Award “for breeding some of the most widely used bedding plants on the market, for being a model for other young breeders with her embrace of technology, and for her mastery of both the art and the science of breeding.”



Amen to all of that!

This is hardly your typical industry achievement—it’s not an annual award; it hasn’t been given since 2014. Previous winners include Claude Hope and Glen Goldsmith, so Ellen is in rarified air!

Since joining the company in 1982, Ellen has bred a broad range of product in annuals, perennials and vegetables—at least 25 different species, including staples like the Dreams Petunias and firsts like Serena, the first seed angelonia. She pushed impatiens to the 95% germination mark and was granted the first utility patent for a flower product for the starburst pattern in impatiens.

Most recently she’s led the group at PanAmerican Seed developing innovative vegetables and herbs for home gardens and local fresh markets. This has resulted in Cajun Belle, an AAS award winner; Candy Cane Red, an attractive striped pepper; and PeppiGrande Red, a red corno di toro (Italian sweet) pepper that’s virtually seedless.

That’s some career, Ellen! Congratulations from all of us at *GrowerTalks/Green Profit!*



Bonnie breaks ground on new HQ

And just in time to meet the increased demand for veggies and herbs! **Bonnie Plants**—which has called Union Springs, Alabama, home since its founding as a small farm in 1918—just broke ground on a state-of-the-art corporate headquarters about an hour northeast in Opelika, Alabama, quite close to Auburn University (with which Bonnie just entered a formal partnership; more on that below).

Why move to the Auburn/Opelika area from the town that’s been the company’s physical and spiritual home for 102 years?

“To support Bonnie’s future growth ... and also facilitate our recent partnership with Auburn University,” company CEO Mike Sutterer told me via email. (He added that they aren’t leaving Union Springs; more on that below, too). Mike explained that they want to enhance their recruiting and retention efforts, and add new and emerging capabilities in areas such as analytics, supply chain and ecommerce.



The new Bonnie building, slated to open late 2021, will be in the Tiger Town Corporate Park and will include several sustainable features, including a 10-foot high indoor living wall by the company Air8Green that will naturally purify the air in the office. The design of the facility incorporates Bonnie's agriculture roots, with a modern farmhouse approach on the exterior and exposed wood beams inside—"almost as if we literally took a barn and renovated it into an office," Mike describes. The new HQ will include a demonstration garden where they'll highlight new varieties for associates and customers.

As Mike mentioned, the move to Opelika will facilitate Bonnie's new partnership with Auburn University. Bonnie has made investments in several key areas of the university, including the Harbert College of Business and the College of Agriculture. They hope the partnership with Auburn will create additional awareness of Bonnie as a potential employer for students and alumni, with the goal of increasing internships and full-time recruiting.

"Auburn University is nationally recognized with strong, talented faculty, student and alumni networks, and is an ideal partner for Bonnie and its future," Mike explained.

Bonnie will focus on engagement with students and faculty to help solve real-world challenges in areas such as product development, logistics and analytics. This will include guest speakers for the classroom and faculty events. Bonnie will also provide in-kind support for multiple gardens across campus and outreach projects. They've made a gift to support two newly endowed annual scholarships—one to a student in the Harbert College of Business studying business analytics and the other in the College of Agriculture for a student majoring in horticulture. The partnership also includes support for Auburn's Center for Supply Chain Innovation.



What about Union Springs?

I didn't figure Bonnie was actually abandoning Union Springs, so I asked Mike for details about that. He confirmed what I figured.

"We're definitely not leaving. We'll still have a huge presence here—in fact, we're investing to expand our operations," he replied. "We've got 450-plus acres of production in Union Springs—it's the largest and most strategically important facility of the 80 growing operations we have around the United States.

"We're expanding our production for finished goods and plugs—including both vegetables and new growth areas like flowers. We are also significantly expanding our ecommerce fulfillment capabilities and footprint, as that business continues to explode with growth. We've got near-term planned capital investments to support increased output and greater overall efficiency. In addition, we're adding over three dozen new positions in production and ecommerce to support our mission in Union Springs. Beyond 2021, our plan is to continue to invest in these areas.

"The investments in Union Springs, the partnership with Auburn University and our new HQ location are all designed to continue to fuel our growth and set Bonnie up for success for the next 100 years."

Did you notice that Mike mentioned flowers? Watch out, bedding plant world!



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Ball enters joint venture with Mexican distributor

Ball Horticultural Company has entered into a joint venture with one of Mexico's leading seed and young plant distributors, [Flores y Plantas de Calidad](#). The two companies have already been business partners for 20 years; this new 50/50 partnership "solidifies their commitment to each other's success, growth and innovation," according to the press release.

Flores y Plantas de Calidad is part of Grupo AKIKO, a leading distributor in Mexico whose founding goes back to 1990 when Akiko Basurto began representing two Dutch companies selling bulbs and seedlings into the Mexican market. Today, Grupo AKIKO has three separate legal entities: Flores y Plantas (a distribution company handling pot and bedding plant inputs), Interbulbos (specializing in bulbs) and SEM Plants (a sales agency servicing grower customers in Mexico City). Ball's deal is just with Flores y Plantas.

"For decades, Ball has enjoyed a strong relationship with Grupo AKIKO as the leading distributor in Mexico and we believe in the growth of the Mexican horticulture market," said Susannah Ball in a statement. "As a neighbor with access to existing supply channels, plus with their dedication to the industry, joining with AKIKO is a positive next step in our ongoing partnership."

“Our vision has always been to provide the highest-quality products with the best technical information to serve our clients,” says Claudia Lee, on behalf of Grupo AKIKO, which serves ornamental growers in more than 15 states of Mexico. “Our customers will ultimately reap the benefits of this partnership and we look forward to more collaboration between our two strong companies.”



Be thankful (and ready) for Millennials

I was invited to sit in on a Garden Center Group webinar the other day. The speaker was demographer Ken Gronbach, president of [KGC Direct](#) and author of the current book “Upside: Profiting from the Profound Demographic Shifts Ahead,” which was also the topic of his presentation.

Ken’s business is to use simple population numbers to explain much of what’s happening in business these days, such as why a funeral home’s business might be down (because people aged 70 to 90 are the smallest generation of the last 100 years); why China is in “terrible shape” (the one child policy prevented the birth of 500 million people, which has left the country bereft of younger people to care for and pay for the aging population); and why the U.S. is “almost perfect—very, very healthy, demographically” (thanks to fairly even population numbers among the various age groups).

“You can predict what populations are going to do based on their age,” Ken says. “Their influence on maternity wards, their influence on toys, schools, motorcycles, automobiles, houses, retirement and then coffins.”

But for us, the news is all about Gen-Y/Millennials, born between 1985 and 2004, meaning they’re age 16 to 35 and they’re 88 million strong—a bigger cohort than the Boomers.

“They’re going to move out of their parents’ basements, they’re going to throw away all those trophies they didn’t deserve, they’re going to marry, start households and families, and they’re going to be your talent and an emerging, monster market for garden center products and services going forward.”

We’ve heard this before about Gen-Y, of course, but it bears repeating that they’re a massive population group, the first of which are just entering the age when folks normally start thinking about gardening and landscaping. Ken added that America is 25 million housing units short of Gen-Y’s projected needs, so we should see a boom in construction and the landscaping that goes along with it.

As for Gen-Y in the workplace, Ken offers this:

- They want a job with purpose and they want a job with flexibility
- They expect transparency and integrity from their employer
- They are sticklers for fairness and empathy—for themselves and others
- They are focused on technology

- They will not work for mean people!

I know we're worried about both attracting good people to work for us and having good customers to sell to. According to Ken, the numbers don't lie, and we just have to be patient and let them age into the roles.



Two new Fine PGRs



Fine Americas is introducing two new PGRs for the ornamentals industry that they say promote rooting and plant development early in the production cycle. **Advocate** helps propagate plants from cuttings, while **Crest** can improve the germination of seed, plant emergence, root growth and seedling development.

Advocate's active ingredient is the plant hormone IBA (indole butyric acid), which stimulates root growth in plant cuttings. You can use it when propagating herbaceous annuals, herbaceous and hard-to-root perennials, softwood cuttings, woody ornamental cuttings, hardwood cuttings, potted rose cuttings, tropicals, and others. You can also use Advocate to treat rooted plugs and seedlings at transplant, helping to reduce transplant shock and stimulate root growth. Apply via total immersion, basal dip, basal end soak or foliar spray. You can also tank mix Advocate with other products typically used in plant production, such as fertilizers, fungicides, insecticides, biostimulants and plant growth regulators to improve plant health and early growth.

Crest contains three PGRs—IBA, Kinetin and gibberellic acid—in proper ratios to aid in early plant growth and development. In addition to its use for improving germination and development, Crest is also effective in establishing young plants for continued growth and development throughout the growing season. Apply it through watering programs or as a foliar spray or sprinch to reduce apical dominance and to promote bud differentiation, cell division, root induction and growth.

"In addition to their individual benefits, these two products work well in tandem," says Greg Johnson, president of Fine Americas. "Crest provides an excellent follow-up treatment to Advocate in both herbaceous and woody cuttings."

Advocate initiates rooting when cuttings are stuck in planting media. Once rooting initiates, applications of Crest help continue to promote growth of both shoots and roots in young plants.

And your plants will have fewer cavities! (Sorry, I couldn't resist).

For more information, visit www.fine-americas.com.



Hardware Show goes virtual

It just won't be the same as hefting the power tools and smelling the meat on the grills in the outdoor display area, but the [National Hardware Show](#), which was slated for May in Las Vegas before the pandemic forced its postponement, is going online October 12 - 15 with a virtual trade show, education and buying opportunities. It had originally been pushed back to September 1-3 as a live event.

Organized by Reed Exhibitions, the virtual event will feature a full slate of educational programming, including keynote addresses; virtual appointments with top industry suppliers and manufacturers; and the chance to see and source the newest products and tools.

Rich Russo, industry vice president of the National Hardware Show, says, "Over the past few months, our team has had to rethink everything and open our minds to new, innovative ideas. We're excited about our pivot to virtual, which allows us to bring our robust NHS programming to customers across the globe in a new, safe way."

If you'd rather see it all live, NHS is planning their next live show for May 11-13, 2021 in Las Vegas.



Don't forget to register ...

... for the big AIPH (International Association of Horticultural Producers) online one-day conference "Recovery from Crisis—the Future for Ornamentals." It's slated for September 15, right in the comfort of your own home or office, utilizing state-of-the-art 3D virtual conferencing technology (can't wait to see what that is all about!).

So far, 30 leading plants and flowers industry figures from 17 countries and regions have joined the speaker lineup, including Abe VanWingerden, one of my insightful columnists (who also happens to co-own a little place called Metrolina Greenhouses), and Dr. Charlie Hall, renowned horticulturist, frequent *GrowerTalks* contributor and occupier of the Ellison Chair in International Horticulture at Texas A&M. Plus plenty of others, including:

- Emma Coupe – Horticulture Trading Manager for Marks & Spencer, UK

- Vadim Bognadov – CEO of Potted, the Netherlands
- John Simko – President of Sunshine Bouquet Company/Esmerelda Group, USA
- Kiki Fernandes and Clement Tulezi – President and CEO of the Kenya Flower Council
- Eva Dahlqvist – Commercial Director of Van Dijk Flora, the Netherlands
- Paul Vonk – President-Elect of the South African Nursery Association
- Mattijs Bodegom - Head of Marketing & Communication at Anthura, the Netherlands
- Josh McBain - Consultancy Director at Foresight Factory, UK

The event starts at 8:00 a.m. CEST (Central European Summer Time, which I grant you is 2:00 a.m. Eastern/1:00 a.m. Central, so you'll want to have the coffee on) with an introductory session on crisis management for the whole industry. Following will be a focus on the cut flower industry, with the afternoon focusing on ornamental plants and trees.

The conference will be in English and you'll need to complete registration by September 7 to secure a place and to set up your digital avatar profiles for the event. Which—thanks to sponsorship support from Royal FloraHolland, PERA, Expo 2021 Hatay, Visser Horti Systems and LVG Plant—is only 55 GBP (about \$72).

Says AIPH Secretary General Tim Briercliffe of the conference, “This year has given us the opportunity to create this unique event that truly brings together the leaders of the ornamentals industry and the low ticket price makes the event accessible to everyone. Join us to be part of shaping our industry for the future.”

To view the full programme, er, program, and to register, visit aiph.org/conference-2020.

How to host an international expo

Not a topic that the average grower or retailer is liable to be interested in, but if you're an association and you're thinking your region or country could do with a big garden expo, AIPH can help. In fact, since 1960 that's been one of their tasks, to approve and regulate international horticultural expositions. And to that end, they're offering a Virtual Expo Conference on September 30 that will tell you all there is to know about hosting or being involved in an international hort expo. Plus, you'll get to network with expo organizers, city representatives interested in hosting an expo, urban developers, AIPH members, NGOs, international city and environmental organizations, and suppliers to major events.

These events are a big deal for their host countries, with billions spent on developing these international spectacles that can have the ability to stimulate the development of entire cities and transform the international reputation of hosting regions. Between 2021 and 2027, AIPH has approved expos in China, Turkey, Qatar, the Netherlands, South Korea and Japan, with more to be approved in upcoming meetings.

Hmmm, maybe the U.S. or Canada should be on that list?

For more information on this event, visit the [International Virtual Expo](#) page.

Brits, too, gardened during lockdown

Not surprisingly, research published by *Yahoo Finance UK* reveals that Brits have spent \$4.9 billion on gardening since the start of the lockdown March 23. That's according to a survey of 2,000 people by American Express. That's an average of \$137 each.

Outdoor plants were the most popular purchase. More than a third (35%) of Brits spent about \$47 on plants for their garden. Compost followed closely behind, with nearly a third (31%) of Brits spending \$35 each. Seeds came in third, with just under a quarter (24%) of people spending \$18 each. One in seven (14%) Brits with a garden or outdoor space has even redesigned the entire space during lockdown, with 12% sharing pictures on social media.

Brits are even extending their new-found joy of gardening to friends, with 15% of survey respondents saying they've been gifted a plant, or home-grown fruit or vegetables from someone they know during lockdown.

Woohoo!

There's only one problem: Another survey I found online in *Good Housekeeping UK*, dated 2016, says that the average Brit spends \$451 per year on their garden.

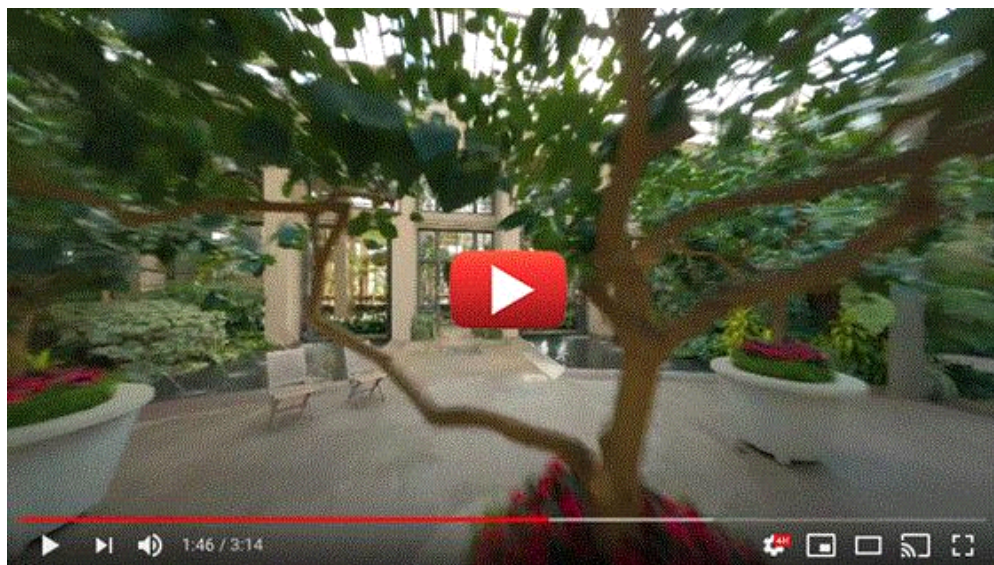
Then I found something from the Horticultural Trade Association dated 2018 that reports the average UK household spend on their garden as \$196.

The bottom line is, we don't know what the heck UK gardeners are up to in their gardens, although there's a good possibility they're growing potatoes, tomatoes and strawberries, says the Royal Horticultural Society, which has seen a spike in website inquiries overall and specifically about these crops.

Oh, and they're composting, too: RHS website searches for that topic were up 500% over the previous year during the first nine days of the lockdown.

Odd. How to compost was not on my mind then. Where to buy toilet paper was.

Finally ...



I'm a fairly good pilot of Snoopy III (but don't inquire about Snoopy I and II, please; it's not pretty), but the guys at Flying Monster take drone videography to a whole new level. In fact, I don't believe they really flew a drone in and around the conservatories of **Longwood Gardens** in the way **THIS VIDEO** would have you believe. There's got to be some camera and editing trickery going on here ... especially seeing how it's filmed in gorgeous 4K.

Watch it on your biggest and best screen!

Remember: Be positive, but test negative!



Chris Beytes

Editor

GrowerTalks and *Green Profit*

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