

# Gloeckner, Ball Reach Agreement; Ladders; Caladiums; Big Santa



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### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Gloeckner, Ball make a deal
- The Ball Seed angle
- My Gloeckner connection
- Two Dutch breeders partner
- Soiree sales support charities
- Learn to grow strawberries
- Display ideas featuring ladders - and doors
- Caladiums for Christmas
- Finally ...



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Joe Simone, the longtime owner, president and CEO of Fred C. Gloeckner & Company, has just announced his plans to retire from the Harrison, New York, distribution center he's owned since 1990 (he started with Gloeckner in 1975). But Joe's succession plan is a bit unusual: Rather than sell the business intact, he's come to an agreement with Ball Horticultural Company to transfer Gloeckner's open orders to Ball Seed, its distribution division. Current Gloeckner orders will be shipped by Gloeckner until December 18; after that, all orders will be managed by Ball Seed.

Why this deal? And why Ball? I asked these two questions (and a couple more) of Joe via email.

"I've been very fortunate to know Anna for many years as a customer of PanAmerican [Seed]," he replied, "But not until we worked together in the Seed Your Future organization did I begin to understand that the way we approached our businesses and our people was very similar—the cultures were quite similar indeed. Also, it was evident that we had a common interest in seeing good research work continue and developing our staff for the future."

Joe said there's no succession plan for the business; I asked him why he went for this deal instead of selling the business intact.

"In working with Todd Billings and Al Davidson (Ball Horticultural's Director of New Business Development and President, respectively), this path was the best way for the smoothest transition for our customers and our people. We have great respect for the Ball organization, and know our customers and vendors will be in good hands. When two organizations get together from a position of strength in the markets they serve, it usually works out best for customers and employees."

Joe is conscious of the legacy of the company and feels that Ball will best preserve that, even if the Gloeckner name will go away in the process.

"We have many long-time employees—several in excess of 25 years," Joe said in the press release. "Our history of dedication to customers, vendors and to colleagues has been very strong. It is similar to the culture found at Ball, which makes this an excellent transition. This agreement allows the Gloeckner investment in people, innovative products and high-quality customer service to be entrusted to an established and respected platform at Ball Seed."

Gloeckner's, which was founded in 1934 by Fred and his father, Carl and Leonard J. Seiger, has a product line that includes flower bulbs, specialty cut flower crops, potted plant programs, seed and other grower supplies for North American customers. It has also built significant business in Latin America through subsidiaries and agents throughout Central and South America. Additionally, they operate a state-of-the-art bulb treatment facility in Clackamas, Oregon, where they process millions of specialty flower bulbs for the U.S. market.

I knew that Gloeckner has long been a major supplier of bulb crops. What I didn't know was that they'd merged with Ednie Flower Bulbs in 2016, with Ednie now a division. Joe and the den Breejen family will continue to operate Ednie and manage its supply chain and technical support for all product lines, which they'll distribute exclusively through Ball Seed.

"[Ednie] has always been what I spend most of my time on and I am looking forward to having a greater focus on flower bulbs and related products," Joe told me. "Ednie has a good reputation in the growing world of specialty cut flower products, too, which will continue to develop with the help of Ball's sales efforts."

Finally, I had to ask Joe, "Are you really retiring? What's your plan for the future, work-wise or play-wise?"

"No, I am not going to have 'golf as my day job,'" he answered, "Although I do spend some time doing that. I will be working hard to support Ednie and the flower bulb customers we have developed for years full-time for the foreseeable future."



## The Ball Seed angle

For the Ball perspective, I spoke with Al Davidson, former Ball Seed President and now President of Ball Horticultural Company (you read that news here a couple weeks ago). Al told me that two of the biggest wins of the arrangement are the bulbs and cut flowers, which are “adjacencies” for Ball Seed, not core products like bedding plants. Gloeckner is the largest distributor of bulbs in the U.S. and possibly North America, Al said.

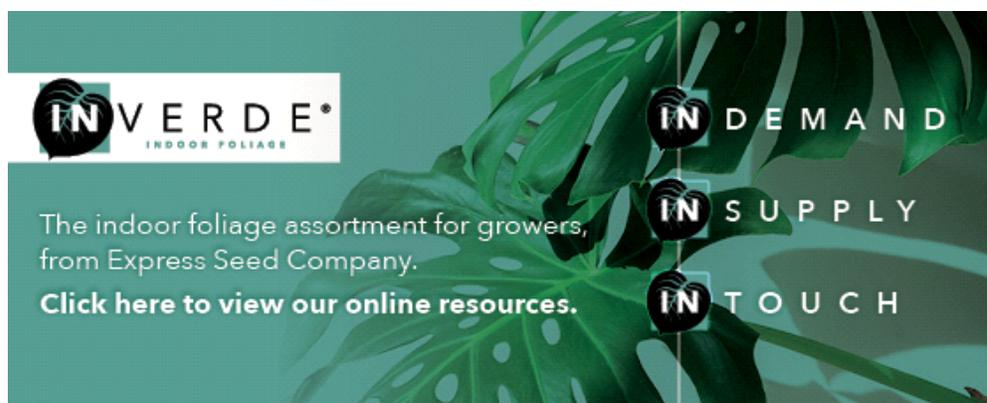
“This gives us an opportunity to really strengthen our cut flower offering and our bulb offering—quite hot crops,” he said, adding that Gloeckner is also strong in potted plants and houseplants.

I asked Al if Ball had given any thought to fully acquiring the business and keeping the Gloeckner name alive.

“Gloeckner’s got a great name in the marketplace, and yeah, we did think about that,” he replied, “Especially down in Central and South America where Gloeckner is an extremely strong name. But we felt to reduce complexity and drive a smooth transition it was best to consolidate under the Ball name.”

To help with the business transition, Al says they’re working on bringing several of Gloeckner’s office and sales staff over to continue research into key markets and products, and develop new and existing relationships with vendors worldwide.

“Our goal will be to take the best of Ball Seed and the best of Gloeckner and put them together to provide the highest level of service to the Gloeckner customer,” Al says.



## My Gloeckner connection

I dealt with several brokers back in my Florida grower days, including Ball Seed, Bill Moore & Co. and Yoder Brothers. But I’ve always had a soft spot for Gloeckner because they were the first broker ever to discover my little Merritt Island potted plant nursery.

It was late fall of 1983, and Laurie and I had gotten so wrapped up in producing our first-ever poinsettia crop that we’d forgotten that Valentine’s Day, our next big holiday, was just around the corner, and we needed plants! Enter Gloeckner and their iconic sales rep Paul Daum, who’d

been with the company since the earliest days. Paul knew every grower in Florida, and he knew a guy down in Lake Worth who happened to have extra hydrangeas and azaleas we could buy. We drove down, picked them up, ordered more stuff for Easter and Mother's Day, and were off to the races, so to speak.

Paul remained a close colleague even as I transitioned out of growing and into journalism. I'd usually see him in Florida at TPIE with his ever-present vast folder of technical articles under his arm. Paul was famous for clipping and sharing relevant stories with his customers, and we certainly received our share!

I mentioned my Gloeckner connection to Joe and I could sense the smile in his reply.

"Paul is an amazing individual, Chris," he wrote. "One of my favorite people in the world. He is greatly responsible for educating me along this journey."

Joe reports that Paul is residing at an assisted living facility in Florida, still reading and writing, "and never waning in his high level of 'horticultural curiosity.'"

Paul, if you're reading this, Merry Christmas!



## **Beekenkamp takes minority share in Schoneveld Breeding**

Two Dutch breeding, production and sales companies have joined forces, citing "joint opportunities in exchanging knowledge of innovative breeding techniques and research." They are Beekenkamp Plants in Maasdijk and Schoneveld Breeding in Wilp, the Netherlands.

Says Peter van de Pol, owner of Schoneveld Breeding, "This collaboration creates an exchange of knowledge and joining of forces is of great added value for the entire chain."

Adds Marc Driessen, Director of Beekenkamp Plants Ornamentals, "This collaboration is primarily intended to increase the effectiveness of research and development. This step creates a beautiful hybrid."



(Left to right) Schoneveld breeding's Danielle van de Pol and Peter van de Pol, and Beekenkamp Plants' An Beekenkamp and Marc Driessen.

Both companies will continue to operate independently in the field of breeding, production and sales.

If you're not up to speed on who these two companies are, Beekenkamp has several divisions that breed ornamental plants and vegetables, and distributes potted and bedding young plants from seed and cuttings. Begonias and chrysanthemums are two of their specialties. Schoneveld breeds, produces and sells around 200 million seeds of cyclamen, primula, ranunculus and campanula.



## **Soiree sales support girls, at-risk youth**

Suntory Flowers announced charitable contributions to two organizations devoted to helping young people thrive: Girls Inc. and Covenant House. A \$10,000 contribution was raised through the sale of Soiree Kawaii Catharanthus plants in 2020.

Inspired by the youthful Kawaii girl brand identity, the campaign launched at Cultivate in July 2019. This culminated in a \$10,000 contribution to Girls Inc., which serves girls ages 6 to 18 at more than 1,400 locations in more than 400 cities in the U.S. and Canada.

Suntory also partnered with growers and retailers in their local markets, such as New Orleans, where Perino's Home and Garden Center donated a total of \$6,560, including a \$3,280 matching contribution from Suntory, toward Covenant House, which help homeless youth in New Orleans. The need is especially great this year, with 130 single mothers and more than 200 children seeking refuge.

"Despite the challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain committed to providing love, respect and hope to all young people who come to us in need," says Covenant House's Donna Slay. "Covenant House offers a lifeline for at-risk and homeless youth, recognizing the inherent good and boundless potential in each of them."



Perino's Home and Garden Center presents the joint donation to Rich Arnold and Donna Slay of Covenant House. Pictured are Buddy Perino's daughters Megan, Emily and Catherine, and nieces Madeline and Adele. All five are managers at the destination garden center in Metairie, Louisiana.



## Learn to grow strawberries

They're good eatin' and good growin', too! And you can learn how to grow them hydroponically, thanks to Hort Americas, which is hosting an online class on the topic. It's Saturday, December 12, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Eastern via Zoom. The cost is just \$50.

In this two-hour class, you'll learn all the important aspects of growing strawberries successfully, from hydroponic growing system selection, best substrate options, nutrient requirement, and how to create the proper rootzone and air environment to promote growth and development in greenhouse production.

Your instructor will be Karla Garcia, part of the Hort Americas Technical Service team. Karla has a Master's in Plant Sciences from the University of Arizona and has been recognized by the International Society for Horticultural Science for her hydroponic strawberry research.

Sign up [HERE](#).



## Shooting some ladders

Enough of the hard news—let's get into the Christmas spirit with some pretty displays!

Laurie and I never miss a Christmas at Blumen Gardens, a quirky little garden center in Sycamore, Illinois. Housed in an old farm implement factory, it's got the brick and iron bones that make an excellent retail setting. Joel and Joan Barczak's staff always inspire with their displays and this year was no different.

The first thing I noted was their inspired use of stepladders. Here are three examples:







Note the excellent color coordination in their displays.



## Two more from Blumen Gardens

Here we see two more ladders ... at least they look like ladders, but they may actually be built to be shelf brackets because the rungs don't seem like regular ladder rungs. Regardless, this kind of shelf always looks good.



Here, we transition from ladders to a clever use of doors and shutters.



Lastly, turn a door into a shelf using simple steel angles and boards.



## **Garden Answers on caladiums for Christmas**

Poinsettias are fine and we all love them (well, some more than others), but sometimes you want options for Christmas plants. Why not caladiums? They're red and green, after all.

Laura LeBoutillier of Garden Answers fame did a YouTube video last week showing some of the new Proven Winners caladiums as a holiday flower. She admits to her mistakes with placement and care, and gives improved examples of indoor placement at the end of the video. Which has had 75,000 views, by the way!



Check it out [HERE](#).

## Finally ...

I'll bet you think those tacky inflatable yard decorations are only found in "those" sorts of neighborhoods, right?

Not so! I was surprised to find, while driving around one of the swankiest towns in the Chicagoland suburbs (Barrington), the biggest inflatable Santa I've ever seen. It was so tall, we had to stop and take this photo:



The homeowner happened to be outside stringing some lights, so we asked about the giant, which could easily be mistaken for a Macy's parade balloon. He acknowledged that it gets plenty of attention, but said displaying such a giant comes with challenges.

"I have to check the wind and the weather before putting him up," he told us with a smile.

Remember, be positive, but test negative!



**Chris Beytes**

Editor

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