

Striking Gerberas + State of the Industry + Hiring Templates



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By JIM NAU



#### COMING UP THIS WEEK:

March Farm Update  
State of the Green Industry  
AFE Hiring Templates  
Ball ColorLink Gerberas  
Webinars on Perennials,  
Water  
Midnight Musings



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#### March Farm Update





The farm is exploding in color. The first of many buckets of ranunculus, anemone and freesia.

It's been unseasonably warm in Michigan. We had highs in the 60s and 70s this week. I get excited for outdoor flower season when it feels like early spring. But don't be fooled—it's too soon to sow heat-loving annuals like zinnias and celosia. Trust me, sit your hands just a touch longer. But we did pull in some specialty dahlia tubers for propagation in hopes of multiplying our supply. This barely satisfied the urge to sow seeds like crazy.

March is a fun time on the farm, because we start to see all of our winter work pay off with bounties of anemone, ranunculus, freesia and snapdragons. And we're also thinking ahead to Mother's Day and summer crops. It's busy, and getting Tater roused before 7 a.m. each morning can be a tough sell. She loves curling up in her fleece blankets. But the rubber is starting to hit the road and it's full speed ahead for the rest of the season until November.

Buckle up team, we've got a lot of ground to cover! Hopefully you'll enjoy the insight and resources Tater and I offer to equip you with the tools you need for your best season yet.

With all that being said, let's talk shop!



## State of the Industry according to Dr. Charlie Hall

Jen Zurko, editor of *GrowerTalks*, attended Dr. Charlie Hall's State of the Industry talk at the iLandscape show in Schaumburg, Illinois, back in January. Dr. Hall is a renowned ag economist and occupant of the **Ellison Chair** at Texas A&M university. Below are 10 takeaways from his talk. Trust me, you might want to read this twice to soak in all the information.

1. Some people still don't get that the pandemic was a global crisis and that the U.S. isn't the only country that has suffered from inflation—however, we are the only one that's bouncing back better and quicker.
2. The stimulus packages that were enacted during the end of the Trump and beginning of the Biden administrations did help the economy ... but it also caused inflation, which economists knew would happen. Charlie said, "It takes a while to move the needle." And since the U.S. economy equals about \$26 trillion dollars, it takes a while to make a dent. "It's hard to steer a big boat."

3. There are projections that people will start to pull back on their spending this year, compared to the last few years that started with the pandemic. "But it doesn't mean people will stop spending money," he said. "We need to make sure we get a share of that."

4. The supply chain is officially "back to normal."

5. The labor market is still strong, but weakening. Charlie said that for every job that's open, there are only 0.7 people available to fill that job. Wages are still going up, but the rate at which they're going up is going down.

6. The prices for inputs paid by growers has gone up a total of 22% since 2020.

7. New home builds are going up again, but sales of existing homes are constrained. Nobody wants to sell their current homes with a 1.7% interest rate to buy another one at 7%, so people are staying put.

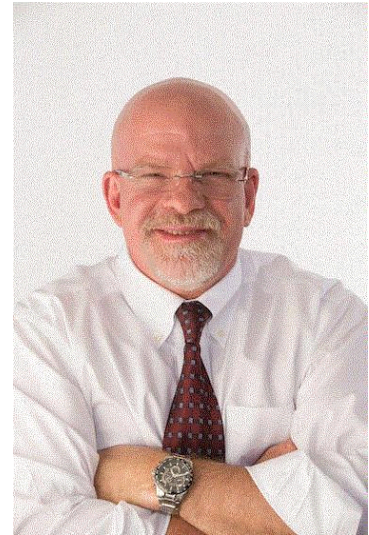
8. As mortgage rates go down, the housing market will pick up, and mortgage debt is declining. Charlie doesn't see the home prices bubble bursting like it did during the Great Recession.

9. Current demographics are favorable for the housing demand in the short run, but there are 11 million fewer people in the prime gardening market. The target age of 44 to 62 years has moved from the Baby Boomers to Generation X, which is a smaller generation population-wise, and the birth rate in general is dropping. This is why legal immigration is good. Productivity + The number of people working = GDP, he says. "It's not rocket science."

10. Spending on goods versus services have come back together after the pandemic and is now at an inflection point. Charlie always jokes that "economists have predicted 23 of the last 11 recessions." But right now, all of the indicators on Charlie's economic dashboard are NOT showing a forthcoming recession.

In conclusion, "There's nothing preventing you, with regard to the economy, from making money in 2024," he said. "There are not many headwinds."

Urged Charlie, "Go out and make hay because there is hay out there."



**AFE Hiring Templates**



Hiring the right people is paramount. Our farm relies on a handful of excellent people each season.

March means that seasonal hiring is right around the corner. If you are late to the party getting your job descriptions polished up, you are in luck! Tater and I found another great resource from our friends at [American Floral Endowment](#) (AFE). Sure, you could use ChatGPT ... but I think starting with a template vetted by a well-respected industry organization is a much better route. AFE even has a job-posting board called AFE Career Center where you can pay to have your listing on their website.

According to Debi Chedester, AFE Executive Director, “ The platform is more than just a job board, its our way of providing every possible resource for both those dreaming of a future in this vibrant field, and current companies struggling with labor issues.”

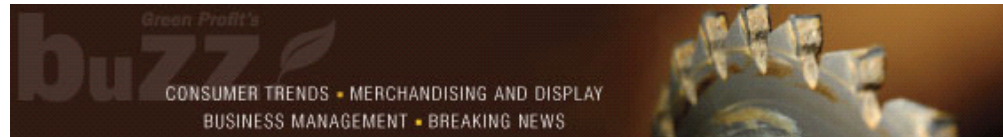
I think that if you have a floral design component to your farm that you are looking to fill, this could be a great option. But at the very least, AFE has recruitment resources and templates for the floral industry.

I encourage you to tailor these [templates](#) to your hiring needs. Your job description and listing may be a candidate's first time connecting with your farm. Don't be generic, or you might lose a great candidate!

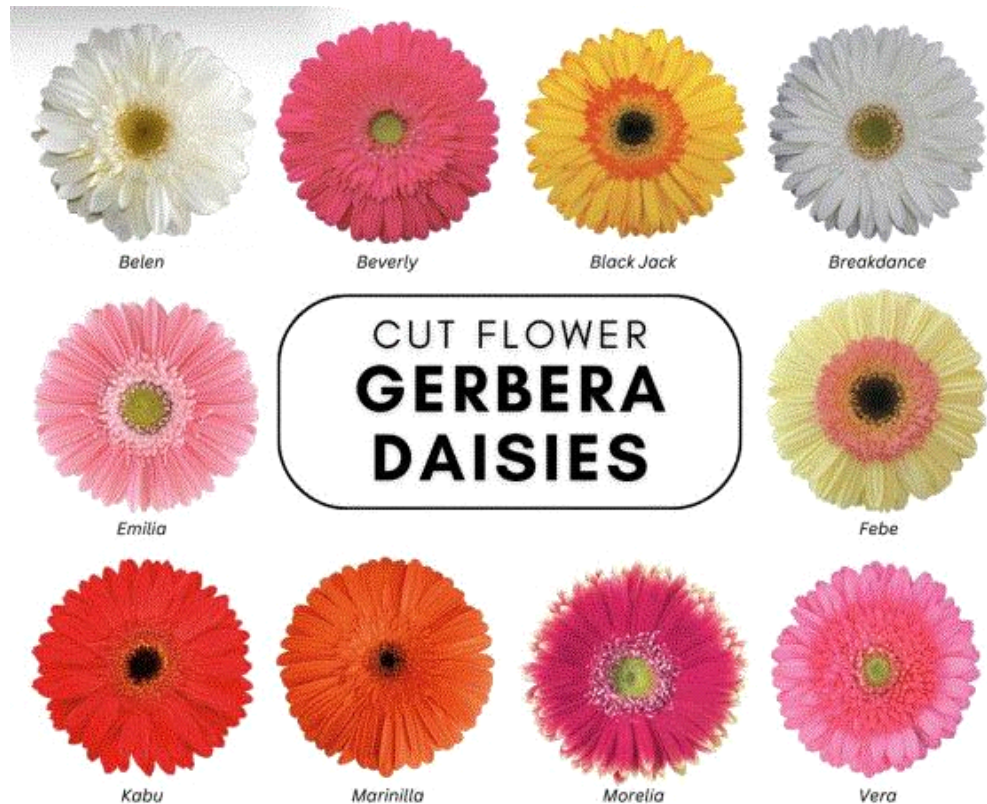
In addition to job descriptions, they have email templates, interview templates and even how to build an internship program. Be sure to check these out. There are four segments: [retail](#), [wholesale](#), [grower](#) and [allied](#).

Have any other tips for hiring seasonal help this season? We would love to hear them. Shoot me

a line at [ldaschner@ballpublishing.com](mailto:ldaschner@ballpublishing.com).



## New Cut Gerberas from ColorLink



Our friends at [Ball ColorLink](#) would like you to meet their new line of cut gerberas. The experts there encourage you to grow these in nursery pots, specifically pot-in-pot, rather than in the ground. You can grow them year round if you have a heated greenhouse and supplemental lighting. These are marathon runners; when cared for properly, gerberas can be harvested for many seasons. But if you don't have heated space, no worries. They are productive from July until frost and can produce 15 to 20 blooms or even more in a season.

Here are some recommended best management practices if you want to try your hand at gerberas:

- Pot plants into 1 gal. pots using a course, well-draining potting mix.
- Place the pot into another empty pot that has been attached to a 2x6 board. This prevents the potted plants from falling over.
- The 2x6 board is mounted on top of 1-in. pipe flanges atop pipes that are driven into the ground. Install the pipes so the plants are at a height that is easy to work with for crop maintenance and harvesting.
- Space the pots so that drip tape can be laid across the pots with one emitter per pot. With 8-in. spacing on the drip tape, the pots would be placed 8-in. on center.

These are available for week 18 shipping from Ball Tagawa. Minimum order is only two 36-count

cell trays. If you would like more information, they are listed on [Webtrack](#), Ball's online ordering system. Or the kind folks at [Ball ColorLink](#) can help you as well.

## Webinar Alert: Perennials, Water Problems

*GrowerTalks* has two awesome webinars on tap for the month. Check out the descriptions below. The webinars are free and chock-full of invaluable information from industry's finest. You can sign up for both at [www.growertalks.com/webinars](http://www.growertalks.com/webinars).

If you are looking to level up, be sure to check these out!

### Top New Perennials at 2024 Retail & a Preview of 2025's Must Watch Perennials

Thursday, March 7, 1 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central (that's today!)

Get to know and learn to grow the top new Proven Winners Perennials. Walters Gardens Regional Product Manager Laura Robles will review 15 of the top new perennials available at retail for 2024, as well as previewing 15 of the top upcoming varieties for 2025. If you want to know what's hot in perennials, this is the webinar for you!

### Dramm on Water II: Common Water Problems and How to Solve Them

Wednesday, March 13, 1 p.m. Eastern/Noon Central

Tater and I are really excited about this one. Water quality is the foundation to any growing program. It's critical to understand your water and how you can improve to enhance crop quality. The folks at Dramm are experts. Growing plants is the conversion of water into plant tissue. Water is the most important input used in horticulture.

Optimizing your water can have huge impacts on your crop. Often, growers experience problems with their source or water quality. Dramm's Kurt Becker will discuss the various common water issues that effect growers and the solutions to each problem.

## Midnight Musings



A winter's worth of work makes this anemone handful incredibly special.

Alright, this goes out to the procrastinator in all of us! You still have time to accomplish the following tasks, but time is ticking! Tater and I just wanted to put a few things on your radar to help your season kick off to succesful start. It's easy to drown in the hustle and bustle of spring and Mother's Day. But you need to make sure these critical tasks are complete before the flower fields roar to life. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it's a good start:

- Dust off your job descriptions and hiring forms. Make sure they are all releveant and up to date.
- Look at your insurance policy for your farm. Is all your equipment listed and covered? Have your insurance needs changed? This is a great time to schedule a meeting with your provider to look at your policy.
- Is your workman's compensation policy going to cover your new hires this season? Update these so you dont get a surprise bill once you complete your audit.
- Look at your cash flow from last season. It's important to have a firm grasp on how money moves in and out of your business, especially if you are looking to invest in farm improvements this season. Make sure you can afford them.
- Better yet, budget for them! Make your budget!
- Order your summer seeds and cuttings ASAP. It's hard to make money if there are no plants in the field.

Tater and I wish you the best flower season yet, and hopefully this list helps you find your focus before the season ramps up.

If you have any topics or interesting things you want us to write about, please reach out. Tater and I would love to hear from you!

Happy Growing!



Lindsay Daschner (and Tater)

Editor-at-Large—*Bloom Beat*

Owner—Forget-Me-Not Farms

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