


NL Going to Far?; RIP Peter Orum; Congrats, Dr. A!



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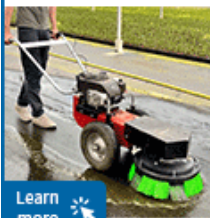
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GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

Flower-crazy NL gone crazy?
In memoriam: Peter Orum
- Comments from the industry
About True Value
Global Produce ideas from JP
Congrats, Dr. A!
A new Wave series
New leafjoy anthuriums
Finally ...



NEW FOR 2026

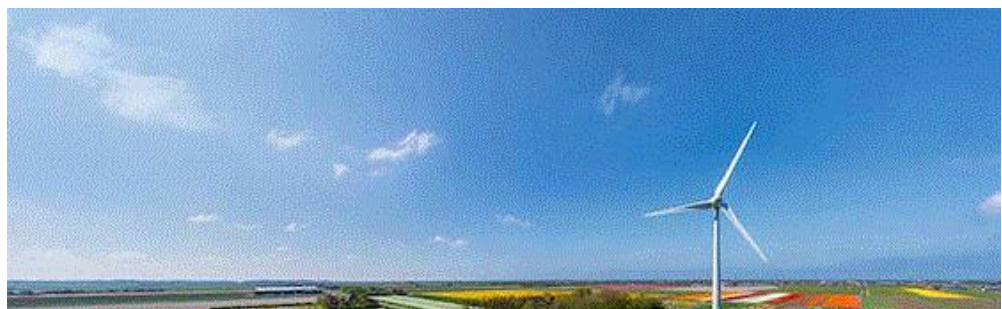


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Flower-crazy NL going against flowers? That IS crazy!

I never knew anything about flower consumption in Europe vs. the U.S. until I took the job with *GrowerTalks* more than 30 years ago and started thinking of the flower industry in global terms, not just Florida terms (where I had my nursery). That's when I learned that many European countries consume flowers at three or four times the U.S. rate. Visiting countries like the Netherlands, the UK and Germany, I witnessed the phenomenon: flowers and plants in every window, bouquets and bunches sold at gas stations that rivaled anything you'd find at a florist shop here, and a selection and freshness that almost forced you to buy.

Which is why I find it—what's the word? Ironic? Humorous? Frightening?—that there are now Dutch communities BANNING flower production and sales. The Dutch, who almost invented and certainly perfected the modern flower industry, deciding flowers are dangerous and should be stopped.



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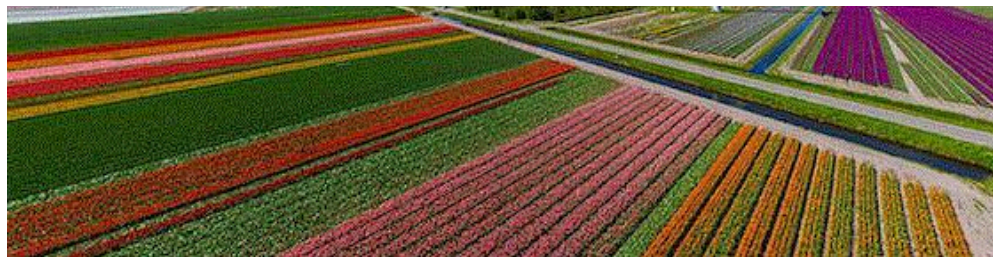
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Is this iconic image in jeopardy? Photo: Fly Over the Fields.

Here are two news stories as evidence:

The first one, titled “Zutphen no longer says it with flowers—because of pollution,” reports that members of the council of the Dutch town of Zutphen have voted to NOT give flowers as city gifts. Why? Supposedly they were swayed by a pro-animal group that argued that every bunch of flowers produces 4 kilograms of CO2 (according to some Flemish sustainability organization). As you can imagine, the local florists were “dismayed” by the decision.

What will the town give as gifts instead of fresh flowers? Dried flowers, organically grown fruit or boxes of sustainably produced chocolates, said the council.

One positive note: They can still send flowers to funerals. I guess they figure the deceased won't be harmed by them.



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We can't wait to share what's next.



Flower-crazy NL (continued)

The second piece says, “Ban them until we know they're safe.” It's about a court case in the Dutch village of Limburg that aimed at banning a lily bulb grower from planting his crops over health concerns about pesticides. There have been other cases affecting the use of chemicals on lily fields, citing evidence of a link between pesticides and neurological disorders. There's a group that wants to use the Dutch courts to regulate future farming.

The Netherlands farms some 15,000 acres to produce 7 billion bulbs each year, says the Internet.

Is the Dutch flower industry in jeopardy due to activist groups filing court cases? I would think not—flowers are such an important part of the country's economy, history and image. Yet the two instances above would indicate that I shouldn't be so certain.



I've got plenty of Dutch readers ... what say you about the current state of the flower industry in NL and Europe in general, especially with regards to its image with the public, as well as legal, regulatory and political threats. Let me know [HERE](#).



In memoriam: Peter Orum

"Life is not always easy, but it is always interesting."

That's a quote from highly regarded and much-loved horticulturist Peter Orum, founder of Midwest Groundcovers in St. Charles, Illinois, who passed away October 17 at home surrounded by friends and family after a four-month battle with a rare form of lymphoma. He was 82.

Peter was born in 1941 in Søborg, a suburb of Copenhagen, Denmark. He spent his early days doing chores in his father's small nursery and working for a neighboring farm, so horticulture was in his blood. Following grade 8, Peter entered a horticulture apprenticeship program, then went on to study at Vilvorde Horticulture School.



After a stint in the Danish army, in 1965 he boarded a ship and sailed to the U.S. to gain work experience at D. Hill Nursery in Dundee, Illinois, honing his growing skills. Soon, with his new wife, Irma, they founded Midwest Groundcovers and later Midwest Trading.

Peter was extremely active in the industry and served in association leadership at the state and national levels, and his awards, recognition and commendations from these groups are numerous.

During the pandemic, Peter determined that he would write his memoirs and in 2022, he published "People, Plants & Politics" (which you can buy [HERE](#)). In it, he discusses the many people who influenced him and whose lives he touched, the plants that have formed the very foundation of his career in horticulture, and the politics that inspired him to work for the legislative reforms he so strongly believed in.

Said Peter of the book, "It has been an interesting journey through life and now for a second time through this book. The journey has brought me unbelievable joy and heartbreaking sadness, and everything in between ... I came from very little in the country Denmark that I loved, to a country, the USA, that gave me tremendous opportunity and that I came to love for its freedom to speak and to do things. Neither is perfect and neither are we."



Comments from the industry about Peter

When I heard the news from Midwest Groundcovers, I shared their post with the friends on my Facebook page. It generated numerous comments and I think you'll see a theme among them. Here are a few:

"An absolute legend and icon, a most generous man."—*Lloyd Traven, Peace Tree Farm*

"When compared to Peter Orum, few industry leaders measure up. Leadership is not always about being the loudest or most visible. Sometimes, quiet thoughtfulness and wisdom wins. How many HRI receptions have we seen Peter leading ... quietly, politely? We will miss him, but his impact and influence lives on! He is a great example of what the nursery industry family is all about."—*Danny Summers, The Garden Center Group*

"Peter was a kind and gentle man. One who had vision and commitment beyond what affected him directly. The world will miss him."—*Ed Bemis, Bemis Farms Nursery*

"A first-class gentleman. He will be missed, but his influence lives on."—*Tim Wood, Spring Meadow Nursery*

"Peter was an exceptional person and a model propagator. It was an honor to be his industry friend. Years ago, I made a presentation at IPPS during the Eastern Regional Meeting. As I was leaving the stage, Mr. Orum rushed forward to shake my hand. It was my proudest moment, standing with a nursery legend."—*Phill King, Greenwood Propagation*

"Truly, one of my very favorite humans ... though we did not agree on everything, our conversations were always intelligent, respectful and insightful. It was a true privilege to have been a travel companion with him, most notably to Denmark on two different occasions—one where it was just the two of us kicking around in a rental car, him (patiently) teaching me Danish pronunciation and sharing his vast personal knowledge, while finding 'hidden gems' to share with our future tour guests. He introduced me to 'the water of life' (akvavit)—though I recall he preferred apple brandy. I will raise a glass to his memory and legacy that will live on in the passion, resilience and integrity of everyone in the Orum family, and the entire MG/MT organization."—*Kellee C. O'Reilly, MonkeyBar Management*

"In our lives, we sometimes meet personalities who come to shape our lives and direction, and there Peter Orum stands for me as a strong mentor, and a great and positive inspirer. Almost 15 years ago, I had the possibility for a seven-month internship at Midwest Groundcovers, which was one of the best times of my life."—*Chris Ryttergaard Andersen, Højgaard Plantenskole (nursery)*

As for myself, I didn't get to spend the kind of quality time with Peter that Kellee did, but I spoke to him at the open houses at his nursery many times, and occasionally called him to ask about politics, immigration reform and other related topics of which he was a deep student. To me, he was a class above the rest of us, already at the mountain top ... an industry icon, as Lloyd Traven said. Yet he was so open and gracious, acting as if a call from me was the highlight of his day. One of the contributors on the Facebook page wrote of his business, "They treated every customer as if they were their biggest account."

I am sure they learned that from Peter.



About the True Value bankruptcy

I wrote about that last time and that Do It Best Hardware will be taking over True Value, and I asked what YOU happen to think. Here's an insightful email from long-time True Value member Kate Terrell, owner of Wallace's Garden Center in Bettendorf, Iowa:

"As a former True Value member (we left January 1 of 2024 after more than 30 years), I can tell you that the Chapter 11 filing is not really a surprise to anyone who's been paying attention. The last few years with True Value have been rough. Leadership changes resulted in a company that couldn't define their identity.

"Several key people retired and were not replaced (IMO, they saw where things were heading). Last summer, in a Hail Mary, I reached out to all the True Value leadership that I had contacts for and expressed my frustration with their lack of direction and loss of commitment to the lawn and garden side of things. Though the direction of True Value was not clear, it was very apparent that lawn and garden (and garden centers) were no longer a priority. After weeks of no response, I finally heard back from them and was basically told that everything was fine and that the Home and Garden Showplace side of True Value was very strong. I stopped placing orders and skipped their fall show, started moving my business to other distributors and then finally pulled the plug on December 31 of 2023. Monday's announcement just proves that we should all trust our instincts when something's not right.



"What it means in our industry right now is that many garden centers that placed orders at the fall show now have to rebook that product somewhere else or hope and pray that Do It Best can secure the product for them.

"Unfortunately for a lot of industry vendors, there will be significant money lost. I have heard from several vendors about six-figure losses. Unfortunately, when our vendors suffer, so do we when it comes to price, availability and shifting around personnel.

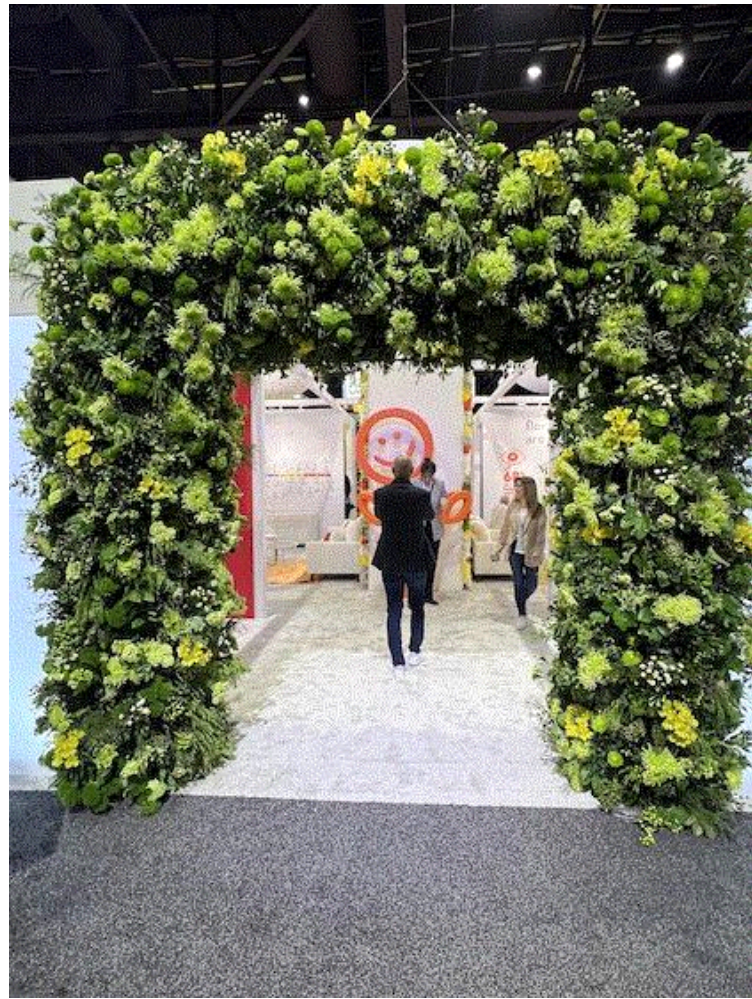
"Another downside is for smaller retailers who would purchase a majority of product through True Value and have it all billed through that one place. Now they have to apply for credit/terms with dozens of vendors and hope that the price levels/discounts/freight that was negotiated by True Value will still apply. Several of my vendors have complained about a lack of information and frustration about not being able to service customers while the details are sorted out."

Quick hits from Global Produce & Floral Show

From our intrepid Managing Editor Jen Polanz, who traveled to Atlanta last week to cover this big produce and floral department trade show, put on by the International Fresh Produce Association:

There's always some great inspiration for how to use florals in creative ways at the annual [Global Produce & Floral Show](#). The floral section came alive with displays that highlighted the beauty and art-like quality of flowers. Here are some examples:











Quick hits (continued)

Here's another display I liked (unfortunately, I didn't catch the name of the company ...). It featured ways floral retailers could capitalize on different celebrations, like, for example, National Coffee Day, which was September 29. I love this little to-go pairing of a coffee cup and a bouquet:



In the same booth, they reinforced the celebrations idea with two stats:

- 68% plan to buy floral before they start shopping
- 77% of floral purchases are made with a reason or occasion in mind

If you're selling floral (or even potted gift) that means more opportunity comes with these small occasions—like Summerween, which I'd never heard of until this show. It's the practice of celebrating Halloween-type activities all through summer, apparently!

Editor's note: I thought it was the trend toward selling Pumpkin Spice coffee in August. But according to Google, Summerween originated with the Disney show "Gravity Falls" in 2012. Unless someone was doing Halloween in summer before that ...?

Make your own nutrient solution for leafy greens

Speaking of the produce show, if you're growing CEA leafy greens and want to try your hand at mixing your own nutrient solution, here's a video by Karla "Professor Grow" Garcia of Microgreens FLN in Navarre, Mexico, and a technical specialist with [Hort Americas](#). It's one of her "Solving Problems in My Farm" videos.



In the **VIDEO**, you learn how to make a nutrient solution from scratch for growing leafy greens hydroponically. Karla, who has a masters in Plant Sciences from the University of Arizona, covers everything you need to know, from considering your water source to adjusting calcium and sulfate levels.

Congrats, Dr. A!

Do I need to tell you that Dr. A. is Dr. Allan Armitage, emeritus professor at the University of Georgia and one of our industry's most renowned plantsman? I didn't think so!

I'm congratulating him for receiving the **McGill Macdonald Distinguished Alumni Award** for 2024. It was at McGill that Dr. A. earned a BSc in Botany in 1967. (If you haven't heard of McGill, it's because it's in Quebec, Canada.)

After some time in the private sector with Aylmer/Del Monte, Dr. A earned a teaching certificate and taught high school for seven years in Quebec. But eager to deepen his knowledge and contribute to plant science, pursued an MS in Horticultural Science at the University of Guelph and then his Ph.D. from Michigan State University. His university career took him to the University of Georgia, where he served for 35 years, receiving numerous accolades for his ground-breaking research, engaging teaching and significant service to the horticultural industry.



Dr. A. has authored 17 books, more than 70 peer-reviewed papers and more than 500 industry articles. His expertise has taken him around the world to lecture, making him a global figure in horticultural education.

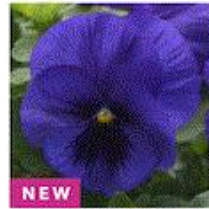
Of course, in his spare time he co-founded ASCFG—the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers—and he established the Trial Gardens at the University of Georgia. He's even responsible for some popular plant cultivars, such as Verbena Homestead Purple, which he and Dr. Michael Dirr found on a drive between Athens and Atlanta, Georgia. Get the whole story from Dr. A. himself [HERE](#).

Wave's 30th anniversary brings a new series

Here's a scoop on a new Wave series coming from [PanAmerican Seed](#) in 2025, the 30th anniversary of the iconic flower brand season. The new series is Top Wave!

Top Wave is not a petunia; it's a pansy that joins Cool Wave, creating a Wave Pansies brand. A spreading pansy, Top Wave is called the "big sister" to Cool Wave because it has flowers that are 25% larger. Use it in window boxes, baskets and container spillers for long-lasting, cool-season color. Great in the landscape, too, they say, spreading and filling in faster than regular pansies. Top Wave starts with eight colors.

NEW Spreading Pansy **Top Wave** Series F1



Blue Blotch



Marina



Orange



Pink Shades



Purple Sunburst



Purple White



Rose Blotch



Violet

As with all the Wave products, PanAmerican will have branded pots available.

Oh, one more bit of news: Somehow, PanAmerican has gotten May 3 designated National Wave Day. They plan various brand festivities around the date.

BTW, May 3 is also National Raspberry Popover Day—that would be a great name for a Wave color!

leafjoy adds DocBlock anthuriums

The foliage trend is alive, well and going on all eight cylinders, with houseplants being the perfect gateway plant for our youngest (under-24) consumers. Which is, no doubt, one of the reasons [The Plant Company](#) has added a line of DocBlock velvet leaf anthuriums to their offerings (which are exclusive to Proven Winners).

These are bred by Dr. Jeff Block, a physician/botanist/"botanical visionary" ([according to his Instagram](#)). Having never heard of the good doctor, I Googled him and found that he's an actual medical doctor and the founder of "Nurturing Nature," which combines clinical healthcare knowledge complemented by expertise in botanical horticulture. He's an expert consultant in endocannabinoid science and botanical medicines.

And, apparently, an anthurium breeder. He offers a line of exotic anthuriums called DocBlock on his [website](#) and The Plant Company has picked some up for Proven Winners that will be called DocBlock Select.



Says the press release, “DocBlock velvet leaf anthuriums feature amazing vigor and quality, and are well-known for their unique textures and striking colors, such as red emergent leaves and silver veining. Dr. Jeff Block carefully hand-selects traits in anthurium seedlings and only introduces those he deems to be most desirable into the DocBlock collection. Those meticulous breeding standards allow this brand of anthuriums to thrive in the rare plant category.”

The line will start with *Anthurium magnificum* Michelle, which was named the Favorite New Flowering Plant at the Tropical Plant International Expo in 2022. They’ll be adding more soon. All plants are guaranteed to have at least three leaves measuring 3 to 6 in. in length when shipped.

“Aroids are a diverse and fascinating group of plants that have captured the imagination of new and veteran plant enthusiasts worldwide,” said Jason vanWingerden, co-founder and CEO of The Plant Company. “Aroid collection has increased in recent years during the houseplant boom and serious collectors want high-quality, healthy plant material they can trust, along with tips to care for their investments. We know they’ll find all of that with DocBlock Select.”

Finally ...

Congratulations to Team Petal Pushers (and Ball Horticultural and PanAmerican Seed) for contributing a total of \$1 million over 13 years to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Encouraged and led by Ball's treasurer/corporate secretary Todd Frauendorfer (right), Team Petal Pushers is Ball's bike team that has participated for years in the [MS Society's Tour de Farms](#) fundraising bike ride through the cornfields of eastern Illinois. Ball, Todd and the Team were honored at this year's MS Gala in Chicago.



More than 250 of Ball's employees and friends have ridden with the Petal Pushers bike team for one or more years. I rode with Team Petal Pushers in Ball's first Tour de Farms event, managing my first-ever century (100 miles on the bike), which was tough! Thanks to many of you, I was in the top 100 of all fundraisers that year. But I can't top Hortistician Dr. Marvin Miller, who I believe has ridden in every tour and has been a top fundraiser (or THE top fundraiser) every year (including 2024). And he seems to have no problems doing 100 miles one day, and 50 or 75 the next.

Feel free to email me at beytes@growertalks.com if you have ideas, comments or questions.

See you next time!

Chris Beytes
Editor-in-Chief
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