



Westhoff, Selecta Settle; Marvin on Novelties; Bad Reviews on Shirts



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COMING UP THIS WEEK:

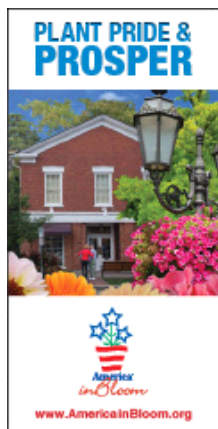
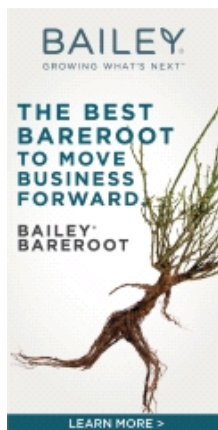
- Sign up for a CEA!
- Autonomous GH Challenge ends
- Westhoff can still sell DiscoBall
- IGOTY finalists named
- Congrats to Debbie Hamrick!
- Auction CEO steps down
- Danziger trend report
- The Hortistician on Novelties
- Caladiums from above

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Food growers: Sign up to win a CEA!



In this case, “CEA” is the “Cultivating Excellence Awards,” which *Inside Grower* magazine (the controlled-environment agriculture sister publication to *GrowerTalks*) is hosting with our awards partner Indoor Ag-Con at their 12th annual show in Las Vegas March 11-12, 2025.



The CEAs “recognize excellent and groundbreaking achievements in the controlled environment agriculture sector.” We’re looking for CEA businesses—those that are growing food crops inside, whether a greenhouse or vertical farm—who are doing great things, innovative things, inspiring things! You can nominate your own business or a client’s business or one location of a multi-unit operation. Find the nomination forms and details [HERE](#).

There are two categories in our inaugural year: Operational Excellence and Good Stewardship. We think the names are self-explanatory. In addition, Indoor Ag-Con is offering a Product Innovation Award category for new products that’ll be exhibited on the trade show floor at Indoor Ag-Con 2025.

For all the details, click [HERE](#).

Good luck! Oh, and act fast: Nominations close December 13!



A bit of global floriculture news

GrowerTalks has been covering the global floriculture industry since the 1930s, when George Ball and his sons traveled to Europe and Asia via a DC-3 Skytrain or a Boeing 314 Clipper, so I have no qualms about using Acres Online to keep you up to date with the goings-on abroad. Here are a few tidbits:

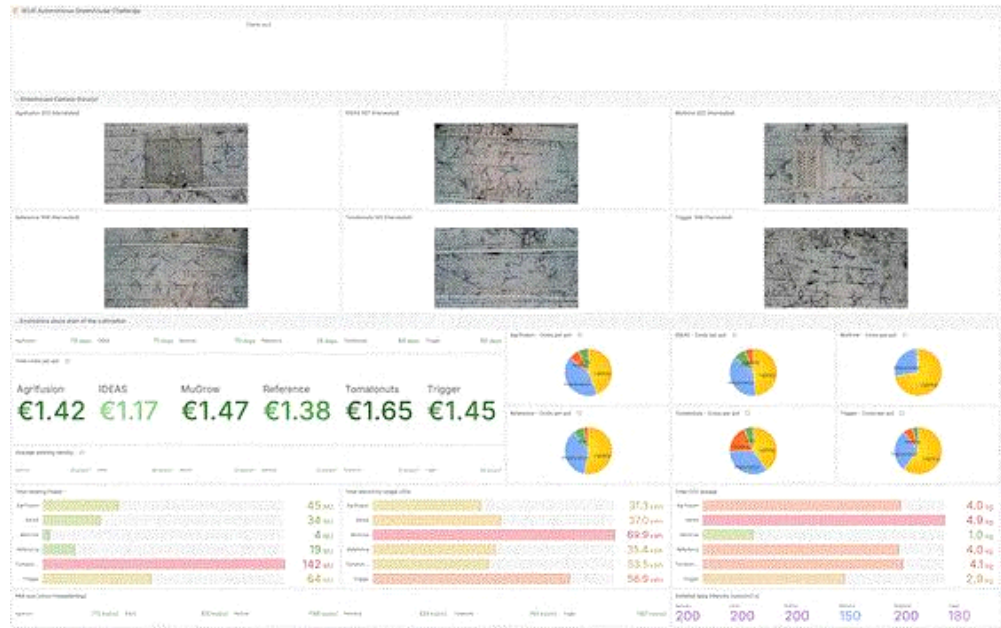
Autonomous Greenhouse Challenge ends; Winner announced January 16

On September 2, six teams of “growers” (well, five teams of scientists and one team of actual growers) started growing tomatoes via remote control in six chambers at Wageningen University and Research. Now, the [WUR Autonomous Greenhouse Challenge](#) has ended, with all six teams harvesting their crops. The only images left online are of empty greenhouse chambers and the data that resulted from the four-month growing competition (and now even the chamber cameras



are turned off).

We won't know the winning team—the one that produced the most fruit at the lowest overall cost—until January 16. But if I knew anything about growing tomatoes, perhaps I could **look at the data** and make an educated guess. Perhaps you can! It all comes down to harvest size and cost. The team with the lowest cost per pot (IDEAS at 1.17 euros per pot) had 40 pots per square meter, meaning they could have made the most fruit. Unless that tight spacing limited fruit quantity or size ...



I like to look at Team Reference, the team of actual growers who produced fruit “the old-fashioned way,” to see what they did. They had 25 pots per square meter at 1.38 euros per pot—the second-lowest cost. But perhaps they got larger, heavier fruit with that wider spacing.

Inside Grower Managing Editor Jen Polanz noted, “What’s interesting is IDEAS finished one day later than MuGrow at almost half the LED energy consumption.”

True!

Anyway, check out the data and **email me** to tell me who you think won!



Westhoff, Selecta settle dispute over spotted petunias

The German flower breeding companies Westhoff and Selecta Klemm have come to a resolution to allow the continued sales of Westhoff's DiscoBall Petunias in the United States. Selecta had previously filed suit against Westhoff in 2023 for patent infringement upon their well-recognized and protected Sky Petunia pattern, introduced into the market in 2016.

No word on the details of the resolution, but it allows Westhoff and their network of licensees to continue to sell their DiscoBall series without fear of violating any legal protections that are in place.

“With the help of our partners in sales and production, as well as Selecta Klemm, this resolution

allows for Westhoff to continue to support and honor all legal protections that protect innovation and drive new variety development,” said Christian Westhoff of Westflowers Breeding. “It is good to be reminded that despite rigorous competition, companies can still come to a compromise for the benefit of growers”

DiscoBall Petunias are available this season for North America from Vivero International, Plant Source International and Cohen Propagation Nurseries.



IGOTY finalists named

Ten top horticulture companies from around the world will be vying for the AIPH International Grower of the Year Awards 2025. The list of finalists represent Spain (2), China (3), the Netherlands (2), Colombia, Belgium and India. Alas, North America is not represented this year ...

Organized by AIPH in partnership with Founding Partner *FloraCulture International (FCI)*, the IGOTY awards recognize the “best of the best” in ornamentals production. An international jury of industry experts assessed the competition entries against specific criteria relating to economic performance, innovation, market insight, sustainability and human resources.

These are the 10 companies selected by the jury as finalists:

Fitorialia, Spain
Huajiangpu, China
Könst Alstroemeria, the Netherlands
La Gaitana Farms, Colombia
Plant Select, Belgium
Qianxinan Green Edge Animal and Plant Technology Development Co., China
SOEX FLORA PVT. LTD, India
Stolkbrothers, the Netherlands
Taizhou Suzhong Horticulture, China
VIVERCID, Spain

The IGOTY Awards consist of four categories: Finished Plants and Trees; Cut Flowers and Bulbs; Young Plants; and Sustainability. One winner will be crowned the AIPH International Grower of the Year 2025 and receive the coveted “Gold Rose.” Past winners include Costa Farms, Metrolina Greenhouses and Brookdale Treeland Nurseries.

All winners will be announced at an awards ceremony on January 28, 2025 at IPM Essen in Essen, Germany.



Congrats to FCI founder Debbie Hamrick

My former colleague Debbie Hamrick, who was once editor of *GrowerTalks* and who was in part

responsible for hiring me back in 1993 (she could have said "Don't do it—he seems crazy ... and he talks too much!") was just been presented with a Silver Carnation Award for her services to the international floral industry as founder of *FloraCulture International* magazine. Debbie accepted the award in Catania, Sicily, Italy, on November 23 from industry veteran and horticultural journalist Arturo Croci, and AIPH president and 2015 Silver Carnation winner Leonardo Capitanio.



Debbie Hamrick with Leonardo Capitanio and Arturo Croci.

Debbie started *FloraCulture International* for Ball Publishing, wanting to create an international version of *GrowerTalks* magazine. She launched it in 1990 at the International Flower Exhibit Aalsmeer. *FCI*, as it became known, is now owned by AIPH—the International Association of Horticultural Producers. Debbie left Ball Publishing to work for Ball Seed Company, then joined the North Carolina Farm Bureau in 2004 to serve as Specialty Crops Director. She recently retired after 20 years helping create policy to benefit producers of fruits, vegetables, flowers, bees, aquaculture and agritourism.

Now in its 50th year, the Silver Carnation Awards recognize excellence and innovation in the field of business management, floriculture, journalism, public governance and floral design in Italy and around the world. Debbie, awarded in the International Journalism Category, was one of nine to receive Silver Carnation honors.



Jen's mi dispiace

Speaking of Italy ... We do our best to get it all right, but once in a while there's a typo that slips past both the writer AND the proofreader. That was the case last time with the spelling of Italian breeder Lazzeri, which got an a instead of an e. Jen Zurko offered this humble mea culpa:

"My apologies to the fine folks at Lazzeri for misspelling their company name. I must have been thinking of pizza or something when I was typing it out, so that's my fault. If they want to fly me

to Italy to apologize in person, I would respectfully suffer the consequences of my mistake."



CEO of the Dutch flower auction steps down

Steven van Schilfgaarde is stepping down as CEO of Royal FloraHolland (RFH) at the end of this year. He's been a board member of the auction since May 2016 and CEO since January 2018. RFH's Supervisory Board will appoint Pieter Bootsma, currently Chief Value Officer and member of the Executive Board, as his successor beginning January 1.

"When I took office, RFH still had all the characteristics of a traditional auction company," said Steven. "Now it is a platform cooperative with both a digital and a logistics platform ... With recent milestones such as the covenant for Floriday and a renewed organization, now is a logical time to hand over the baton so that my successor and the renewed management team can continue to shape growth on the basis of the strategy outlined."



Steven and I had the pleasure of presenting the Gold Rose together at the IGOTY Awards for many years.

Under his tenure, the auction launched Floriday, a single digital platform where growers, buyers, service providers and software suppliers can come together and conduct business easily and efficiently.

Evert van Helvoort, chairman of the auction's supervisory board, said of Steven, "[He] has ensured stability, continuity and trust among members, growers and buyers ... Steven also successfully fought hard for the industry's interests during COVID and the energy crisis. Thanks to him, RFH is now set in position for success."



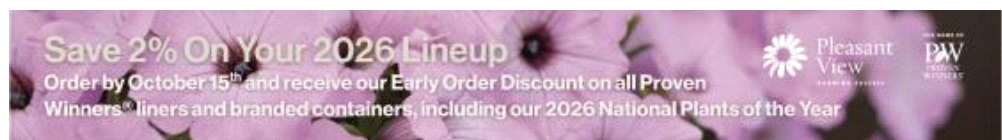
Danziger trend report

Plants and wellness are still definitely a thing, said trendwatcher Martha Kastelein, who recently did a project for Israeli plant breeder Danziger and their annual InnovationFest.

Martha's Insights & Highlights report on the importance of plants for our well-being, including marketing and retail examples. Said Danziger, "Be inspired and discover how to share the 'surround yourself with plants' message with your consumers, globally."

"We are increasingly aware of the power of nature and the importance of a healthy living environment—a world where people increasingly want to be in harmony with the elements of earth," said Martha. "It gives us inner peace, energy and balance. It provides relaxation, focus and connection."

Access her full trends report [HERE](#).



The Hortistican on novelty poinsettias

If you watched to the end of Jen Zurko's video from the Heimos poinsettia trial, you were treated to Dr. Marvin N. Miller doffing his lab coat and waxing poetic on the benefits of novelty poinsettias—which, while making up only about 20% of sales, occupied 56% of the variety space.



Like any great thespian, Marvin felt his performance could have delved deeper into the topic. But the directors (Jen and Osvaldo) kept telling him to speed it up and keep it short. Having time to think about it post-trial, Marvin would now add the following consumer-centric arguments for offering more novelty poinsettias:

Novelties offer many other poinsettia options for those who may not like red. “Additional color options may complement one’s interior decorations better than red options.”

Something else may go better with your Man Cave. “I’m reminded of a visit to Perino’s Garden Center in Metairie, Louisiana, many years ago. Perino’s was offering Christmas tree flocking services in every color imaginable, including black and purple, for those whose Man Cave’s supported the New Orleans Saints. While we don’t have black or purple poinsettias, we certainly can paint poinsettias to match almost any color. And while it is not exclusive, white poinsettias are most often chosen for painting. And if your Man Cave colors are not quite as extreme as those of the New Orleans football team, there could very well be a novelty poinsettia color that might naturally match or complement your Man Cave color palette.”

Combinations. “We often see combo pots of poinsettias, most notably red and white or red, white and pink or even pink, white and marble pots. But with the range of novelties on the market today, combination pot offerings could be even more wide-ranging. And don’t forget, we can also add a poinsettia plant to a combination pot with other plants for a truly unique holiday offering.”

On occasion, the consumer might like something different. “I have seen Christmas trees decorated with everything but the traditional Christmas ornaments. Perhaps in one room of your house, you have a tree of a different color. Maybe there is a novelty poinsettia that will match that purple and gold tree or the orange motif you’ve just created.”

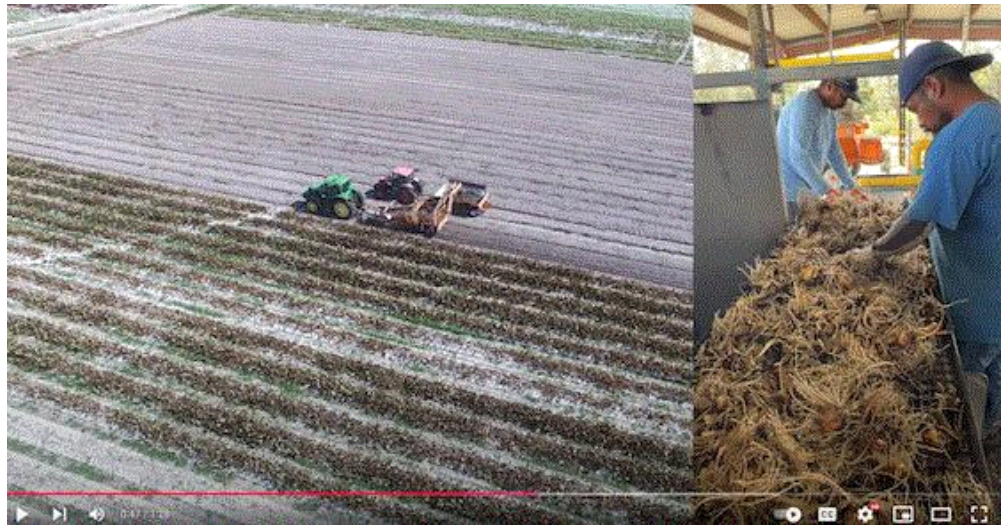
Some consumers, especially younger consumers or those with a different heritage than most, may not be as tied to the red poinsettias we often view as traditional. “For these, a larger novelty offering may be just what sparks a purchase.”

For your viewing pleasure and poinsettia edification, we’ve made Marvin’s video a standalone. Watch it [HERE](#). And check out his previous educational offerings on [CYATHIUM](#) and [INVOLUCRES](#).



Caladium harvest from above

Another video, this one even quicker than Marvin’s, shot by Snoopy the Drone on his recent trip to Zolfo Springs, Florida, and Classic Caladiums, to see how they harvest hundreds of acres of caladium bulbs ... except, they aren’t bulbs, they’re corms, AKA tubers. Regardless, we wanted to see the operation from above and Snoopy obliged!



Check out our quick, but colorful, video [HERE](#).

Rudbeckia 'Treasure Trove'
New to Proven Winners
Perennials for 2025-2026!



Finally ...



Clever sayings on the backs of work shirts seems to be a trend ... and I like it! Here are three, modeled by the ladies at independent retailer Rockledge Gardens in Rockledge, Florida: "I'm kind of a big dill." "Thistle be the best day ever." And "I'm rooting for you."

But, nowadays, clever is almost expected. What about really unexpected—like this one-star online review?



At Big Earth Landscape Supply in central west Florida, they're adamant about the fact that their sod is NOT, under any circumstances, guaranteed or warrantied. Their website Sod Disclaimer reads, in part, "Sod in this state is incredibly vulnerable, and if you are not prepared to take care of your new lawn like you would a new puppy, then please do not order sod from us."

The staff shirts help drive that point home in humorous fashion.



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

See you next time!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Chi'.

Chris Beytes

Editor-in-Chief

GrowerTalks and Green Profit

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