

Suntory Buys MNP; Gold Medal Winners; Sign Up for CAST!



BE IN THE KNOW  
*Timely news and commentary from GrowerTalks*

subscribe

9 greenhouses,  
27,000 sq. ft.

Fogged in 20 minutes.  
How long does it take  
you to spray?



pulsFOG

**DRAMM**

LINE  
**BOSS**

Complete  
LABELING SOLUTIONS  
FOR GROWERS



REDUCE LABOR  
 REDUCE EXPENSES  
 REDUCE INVENTORY

**ADVANTAGE LABEL & PACKAGING, INC.**



FlowerTrials®

9-12 June 2026

Register online

where Plants  
meet People



Goodbye  
Grime.



Learn more




# GrowerTalks' Acres Online

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

IPPS gets a new name: IPPS  
Suntory buys partner  
American Farms promotes John Stilt.Pro acquires Kase  
Two Fleuroselect Gold winners  
CAST registration now open  
Koppert's Airbreez  
Two fresh catalogs  
Finally ...



DÜMMEN ORANGE.



←  
VIEW  
our NEW  
ANNUALS  
CATALOG!



NEW FOR 2027




## IPPS is now IPPS

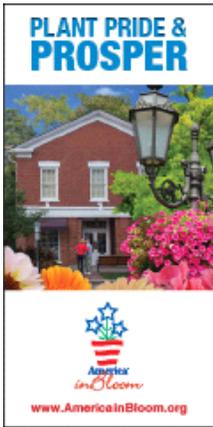
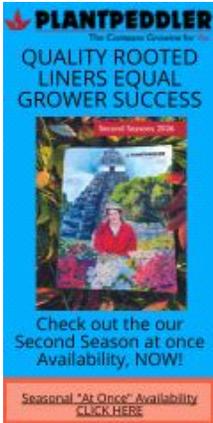
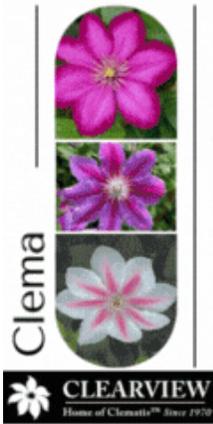
Perhaps I should be less obtuse. The International Plant Propagators' Society has taken a vote of its membership and six out of seven regions voted in favor of adopting a new name: the [International Plant Production Society](#).

At least they won't have to buy new monogrammed towels.

Why the new name? The organization wants to commit to "a broader and more inclusive scope, encompassing all facets of plant production"—not just propagation. They say the term production "highlights the entire lifecycle of plants, from propagation and cultivation to harvest and beyond. It embraces the interconnected processes that support sustainable and efficient plant management, allowing the society to maintain itself as a leader in addressing challenges in plant production."

And, ideally, they add, expanding the scope of the society will attract a wider membership and more sponsors to support it.

I agree that it's a good idea. I've been aware of the IPPS for years and have made mention of various meetings. But I've viewed the society as representing a narrow niche: those who are seriously into plant propagation. Not growing, not selling. Just propagating. Perhaps I was wrong ... now I can assume I am, at least moving forward.



## Suntory buys partner MNP, launches European division

Last fall, Suntory Flowers Limited acquired its European partner Moerheim New Plants (MNP) of the Netherlands as part of its strategic initiative to expand business in Europe. This new venture will enhance Suntory's business in bedding plants, as well as fresh cut flowers, said the press release. MNP is now officially [Suntory Flowers Europe B.V.](#)

The Suntory/MNP partnership goes back a long time, all the way to the late 1980s with the launch of Surfinia—the first petunia series grown from cuttings, not seeds like the competitors. These big, vigorous petunias ignited a gardening boom in Europe and sent breeders around the world on the hunt for their own vegetative petunias, of which there are scores of series today. They also launched Million Bells, the first calibrachoa on the market, which had the same impact on the industry.

Since then, MNP and Suntory have continued to develop and brand more unique varieties like Sun Parasol, Senetti and Sundaville.



Suntory Flowers President Yasunori Yomo (center) said of the new venture, "With the launch of Suntory Flowers Europe, we are aiming to accelerate our foreign business operations, focusing on Europe, our most important region."

MNP's Jeroen Egtberts (left) will serve as president of Suntory Flowers Europe. The leadership team also includes Munenori Inagaki (right), who manages Suntory Flowers' European business.

"We remain fully dedicated to delivering the quality and innovation that have defined MNP for decades, with a firm commitment to future growth and prosperity for all involved," said Jeroen.

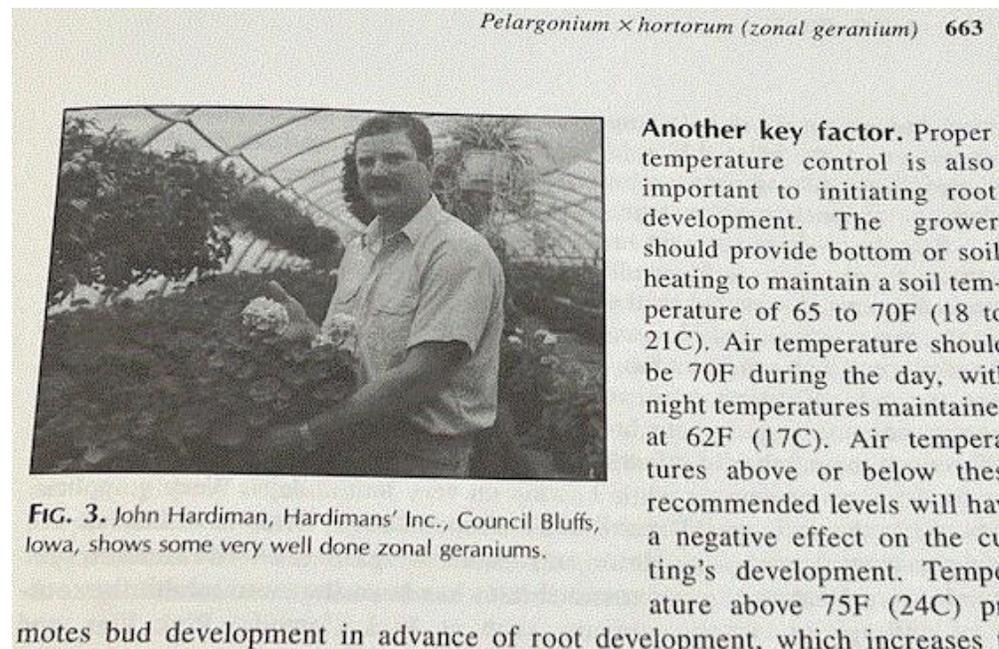


## American Farms promotes new Managing Director

American Farms of Naples, Florida, has announced the promotion of John Hardiman to the position of managing director. John, who's held numerous roles at the company—including maintenance manager, head grower and most recently general manager—succeeds Christine Raber, long-time co-owner and managing director. She and business partner Jim Pugh (director of horticulture) sold the business in 2021 to the Hoffmann Family of Companies, a Naples-based private equity firm that owns more than 200 brands and companies in 30 countries.

John, who's been with American Farms since 2015, has 50 years in the industry (he doesn't look nearly old enough for that). Truth be told, he said he started at age 8, raking in his grandfather's greenhouses in Iowa (founded in 1928) for 25 cents an hour. He told me via email that one highlight was when Vic Ball came to visit their 2-acre operation.

"He was impressed at our growing abilities and put me in the *Ball Red Book* watering geraniums!" And, indeed, there he is, in the 16th Edition, page 663, in the chapter on pelargoniums.



As for Christine and Jim, I'm told she's stepping back and working part time, and he's staying on as an advisor for at least another year.

Via email, I asked John what his plans were for building on the success of the founders.

"At American Farms now, as with every other greenhouse operation in the country, labor is the key issue. We've implemented lots of new automation—transplanters and tray de-stackers, to

name a few ... [We] actually had an ROI on our first TTA transplanter of four months! Now we're seriously looking at sticking lines to help alleviate even more labor."



**New Project? Build it Efficiently.**  
Heating systems engineered for performance from day one.  
BioTherm-designed heating systems with RBI boilers and Sterling unit heaters.

**BioTherm** **RBI** **STERLING**  
HVAC PRODUCTS

## STILT.PRO acquires Kase Horticulture

Two machine companies become one with the acquisition of **Kase Horticulture** of Whitney, Texas, by the young company **STILT.PRO** of Thomson, Georgia. STILT.PRO was founded by Tom Knuth in 2018 after his engineering stints with John Deere and Cirrus Aircraft.

The move integrates Kase's line of horticulture bulk material handling equipment into STILT.PRO's offerings, "enhancing its capacity to deliver mechanized and automated solutions that improve workforce efficiency in the horticulture industry," (said the press release). Kase Horticulture dates back to 1982.

"This acquisition lets us better support our customers' goals with a more complete product offering," said Tom. "Kase Horticulture's products and expertise align with our mission to provide mechanized and automated solutions that enhance operational efficiency in horticulture."



**Canna**  
**TROPICANNA**

- The perfect "thriller" in containers
- Available in 3 colors

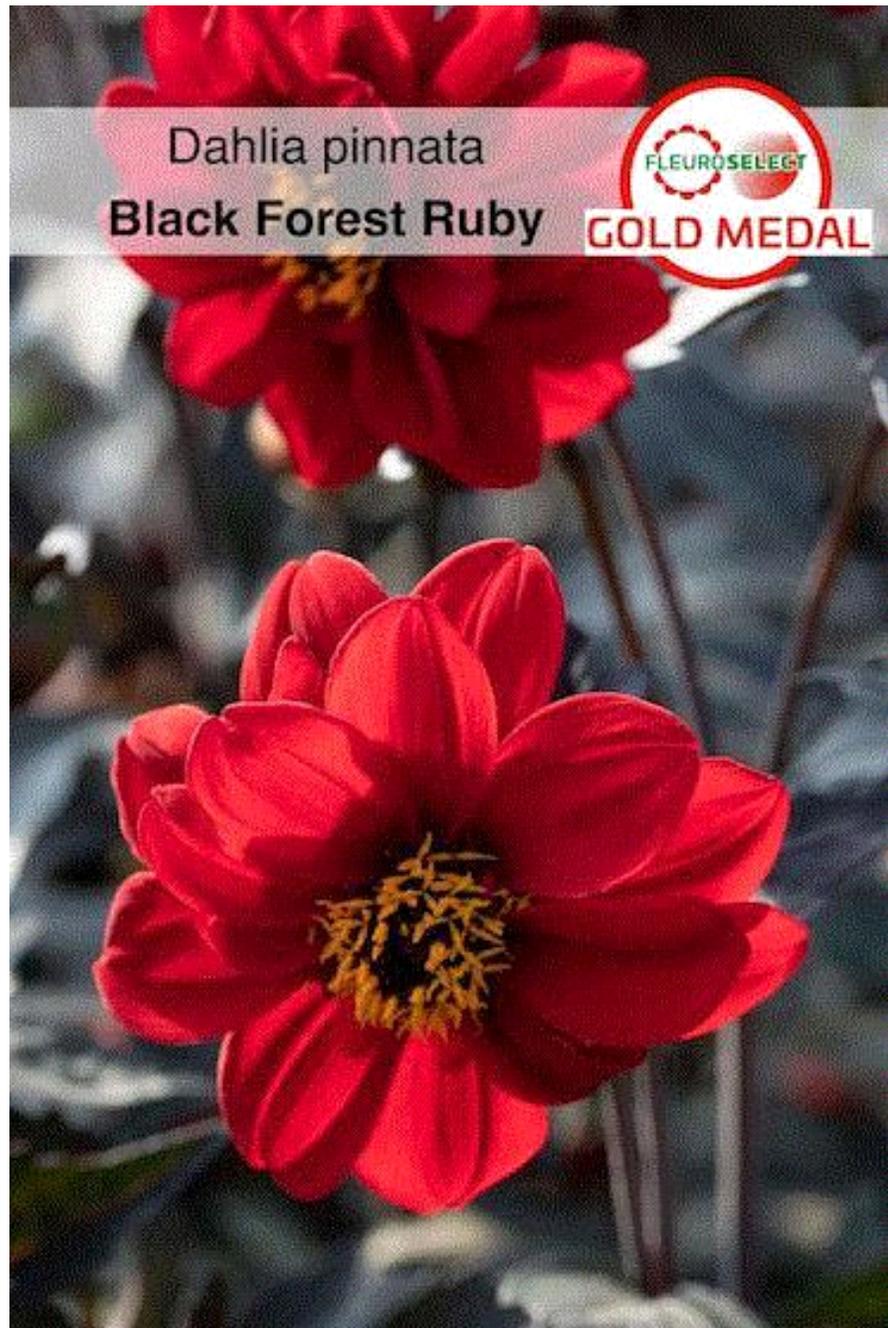
tesselaar.com

## Fleuroselect names two Gold Medal winners

Even though **Fleuroselect** is a Europe-based plant trialing organization, I'm happy to mention their top-prize Gold Medal winners here because: 1) They're sure to be good performers most anywhere; and 2) they're most likely available to you from somebody ... I mean, Europe doesn't get to keep the good stuff for themselves! North America is THE market, baby!

Here are the two winners they just announced—in their own words, so you can see what they like about the varieties:

**Dahlia Black Forest Ruby** (Takii Europe)



“Dahlias have become increasingly popular over the past few years due to their stunning variety, impressive flower shapes and captivating colors. Fully in line with the current movement, Takii Europe introduces Black Forest Ruby, a dazzling dahlia from seed. This breeding breakthrough displays stunning single to double flowers, which radiate in all shades of red, ranging from scarlet to wine, and contrast beautifully to the dark pinnata leaves.

“Black Forest Ruby is an excellent choice for a combo container and thrives in sunny beds. Growers will find that this new dahlia is easy to produce and results in highly uniform plants. Retailers will marvel over the attractive flower/leaf color combination, which stands out on the benches.

“Consumers will welcome the outstanding garden performance, as Black Forest Ruby flowers continuously from summer over autumn until the first frost. Displaying captivating color contrasts, Black Forest Ruby is a very welcome addition to the current dahlia seed assortment. The Fleuroselect jury praised its visually exceptional red flowers against the dark foliage on full, uniform plants and saw high potential for growers, retailers and consumers.”

By the way, *Black Forest Ruby* is also a 2025 AAS National Winner.

***Salvia splendens* Estella Coral** (Van Hemert & Co.)



“One of the current gardening trends is the shift towards less formality, aiming for a more naturalistic look with a milder color palette. The latest *Salvia splendens* Estella Coral from Van Hemert & Co. fully fits within this movement and is a breeding breakthrough in many ways. This plant innovation shows a fully new habit compared to the known *S. splendens* types. Estella Coral is bigger, bushier, well-branched and therefore suitable for wildlife-inspired gardening, large patio containers or landscaping where vigor is required.

“In addition to its innovative plant shape, also the flower color is completely new in this bushy salvia type from seed. Estella Coral's large, rose flower spikes bloom all season long, providing splendid color and texture in the garden. Growers and gardeners will be delighted to discover that Estella Coral flowers one week earlier compared to the standard *S. splendens* varieties. Grown or planted in a sunny spot and well-drained soil, Estella Coral will produce heaps of flowers and attract several types of pollinators.

“Together with red, white and purple, Estella Coral is part of a series opening new markets for *Salvia splendens*. In addition to the innovative plant habit and earliness, Rose is also a breakthrough in terms of color in this bushy *S. splendens* type. Therefore, the Fleuroselect jury decided to award this variety with the coveted Gold Medal.”

Van Hemert & Co., eh? Hmm. I don't know them. Anybody making their seed varieties available in the U.S. or Canada? Let me know [HERE](#) and I'll pass the info along so folks can give the Estella series a try.



## California Spring Trials registration now open

Speaking of new varieties, if you have any notion of traveling to the [California Spring Trials](#) (CAST) March 25-29, now is the time to get your reservations made—for your stops, your hotel, your flights and your rental car.

We've heard hotels and cars may be in short supply due to the fires, so act quickly. Airfares are ... well, let's just say that, like the old gray mare, they ain't what they used to be. It's costing me \$750 from Orlando to LA; Jen Zurko is paying more than \$1,000 from Chicago (she blames Spring Break).

To reserve your spot at each trial, you now use one central website instead of having to contact each trial individually. The National Garden Bureau has taken on the task of providing a [one-stop registration website](#). I used it yesterday and it's a pretty painless process to find the stop, the trials at the stop and the time window in which you'd like to visit. The system allows for efficient group

registration, enabling one person to register up to 10 traveling companions on their behalf. (Hey, JenZ, did you know that you could have signed up me, Bill and Osvaldo?)

Thinking about attending for the first time, but you're on the fence? Susie Raker of Raker-Roberta's Young Plants said this is why she goes every year:

"CAST is an important part of the program development process for Raker-Roberta's Young Plants. It's one of the first places we get to see new introductions live and in person. The uniqueness of the event allows us one-on-one time with breeders to learn about their new products, review older genetic lines and see what is coming down the pipeline. We frequently see new technology and treatments in the industry, and it affords the opportunity to interact with and exchange information with other industry members in a laid-back, comfortable atmosphere."

Of course, if you can't go, our extensive [email, video, print and photo coverage](#) will be almost as good ... and a lot less expensive!





## New biocontrol applicator from Koppert

Beneficial bugs are catching on with growers who are looking for sustainable and effective insect control. But you have to introduce the little critters into your growing space properly or they won't be effective. Or worse, you'll damage them in the process. That's where the new Natutec Aiobreez comes in: it's a hand-held blower designed to offer enhanced precision, efficiency and labor savings in distributing beneficial organisms. And it's tailor-made for low- to mid-tech covered growing environments.

That might be your operation!

The Aiobreez is a battery-powered, handheld blower that uses a unique gentle airflow to disperse natural enemies safely over crops. It incorporates a patent-pending double-duct system that ensures uniform coverage with an effective range of up to four meters (13 ft.).





“We’ve never seen our beneficial insects arrive at their destination in better condition or more evenly distributed,” said Maikel van Essen, product manager at Koppert. “The Aiobreez sets a new industry standard for handheld blowers—not only in performance, but also in usability. By releasing beneficial insects through a gentle, controlled airstream, we ensure the organisms reach their destination in optimal condition, with mortality rates below 2%.”

And with a closed dosage system that includes 15 settings, the Aiobreez is designed to ensure every product is applied with pinpoint accuracy.

“Our customers can trust that no material is lost during application, which is crucial for both efficiency and cost-effectiveness,” Maikel adds.

Learn more about the Aiobreez in [THIS VIDEO](#).

## **Who doesn't love the smell of a new catalog?**

Only you'll have to imagine that fresh ink and warm paper smell with the two online catalogs that I link you to below. However, I'm certain there are print editions available, too; just ask your favorite sales rep.

## **Griffin Greenhouse 2025 Retail and Grower Supplies**

Griffin Greenhouse Supplies announced the availability of their 2025 Retail and Grower Supplies catalogs. These catalogs feature an extensive selection of high-quality products tailored to meet the needs of both independent garden centers and commercial growers.



Highlights include:

- Tools and Equipment: Innovative tools and advanced equipment designed to enhance productivity and efficiency
- Greenhouse Supplies: Solutions for production, irrigation and crop management to ensure optimal crop health
- Ecological: Eco-friendly products and practices to support environmentally responsible operations
- Expert advice and seasonal recommendations to help guide your purchasing decisions and maximize your success throughout the year

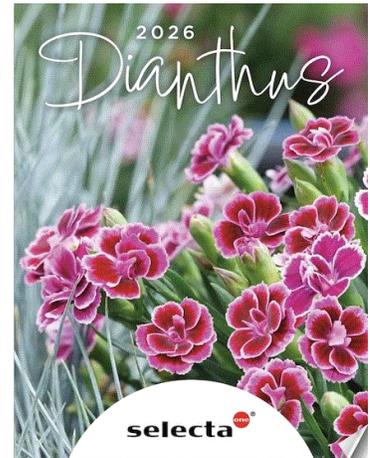
For an online or PDF copy of the 2025 [RETAIL CATALOG](#) or [GROWER SUPPLIES CATALOG](#), click the links.

**Selecta One's 2026 Dianthus Catalog**

With Selecta One now USDA-certified to bring dianthus cuttings into America from its off-shore farm, they're really making hay with this popular crop—and they hope you will, too. For varieties and ideas, you need to check out their 2026 Dianthus Catalog.

Inside, you'll find 13 dianthus families to meet any production or market need: indoor gifts, outdoor pots, annual and perennials. There's an idea guide, a scheduling chart, a root & sell directory ... everything you need to produce and sell top-notch dianthus.

Find the online and PDF version [HERE](#).



## Finally ...



For the 21st year, *GrowerTalks* is awarding a deserving young (under the age of 35) grower with the coveted Young Grower Award for 2025 and [nomination forms are now available!](#) Feel free to nominate an employee, a peer, a friend or even yourself! Nominations are due by March 1.

Now, if garden center retail is your thing, *Green Profit's* 20th Annual [Young Retailer Award nomination forms](#) are also open and due by March 1.

Here are some more details about these prestigious awards:

- We choose three finalists for each award and each gets to write an essay (a guest editorial, really) for the June issue of *GrowerTalks* and *Green Profit* based on a topic selected by our editors.

(Here's a link to the [JUNE 2024 ESSAYS](#) if you want to check out some examples.)

- All six finalists are invited to attend Cultivate'25 in Columbus in July and attend dinner with editors, judges and sponsors before the awards ceremony.

- The winners for each award are announced at the Cultivate'25 Unplugged event for young professionals.

- Said winners will be featured on the covers of the September issue of *GrowerTalks and Green Profit* (achieving great fame and fortune ... well maybe fame) and will be a judge for next year's award.

These two awards are excellent ways to recognize the next movers and shakers in greenhouses and garden centers—but it's up to you to identify and nominate them. Now's your chance!

A big THANK YOU! to the generous sponsors who make these awards possible: Ball Horticultural Company, BASF, The Garden Center Group and AmericanHort.

Feel free to email me at [beytes@growertalks.com](mailto:beytes@growertalks.com) if you have ideas, comments or questions.

Happy New Year!



**Chris Beytes**  
Editor-in-Chief  
*GrowerTalks and Green Profit*

**This e-mail received by 29,672 loyal readers!**

Thanks to my loyal sponsors, who help me reach the 29,672 readers of *Acres Online* in more than 60 countries. Want to be one of them (a sponsor, that is)? Give **Kim Brown** a shout and she will tell you about our many advertising opportunities.

