

At Brad's Bedding; Florida Poinsettias; Woody News



Bring home the **BEACON!**

Consumers pay more for brands they know and love.

BEACON
IMPATIENS

BE IN THE KNOW
Timely news and commentary from GrowerTalks

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2025

[subscribe](#)



The best irrigation system is the one custom designed for you.

DRAMM

[click to get started](#)



All the seed **YOU NEED!**

ORDER ONLINE AT
WebTrack.BallSeed.com

BallSeed.



GrowerTalks' **Acres Online**

News and Commentary from GrowerTalks Magazine

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

- Read the Fall River Ridge Report
- Ken Fisher to step down
- Brad news is good news
- Florida poinsettias
- Why Bradley likes hort
- IGCA gets a new U.S. rep
- Woody news from Bailey, Star
- FFA honors Lanie Riner
- Five education opportunities



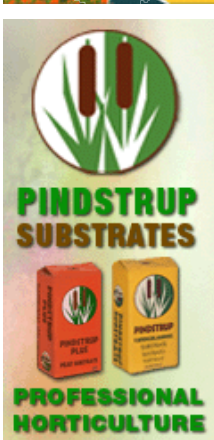
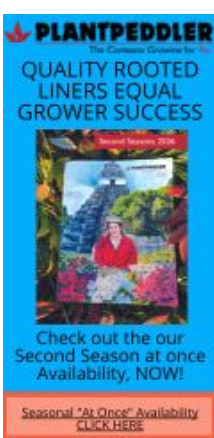
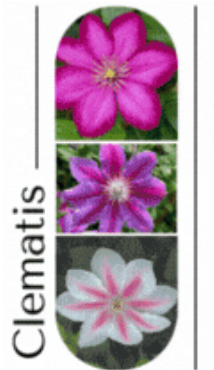
DÜMMEN ORANGE.





← **VIEW our NEW ANNUALS CATALOG!**

[Read the Fall River Ridge Report HERE](#)



Well, not there because I'm unable to put a link in a headline. But you can read it [HERE](#). Or [HERE](#).

That's just in case you missed the special *Acres Online* I sent earlier this week containing the much-anticipated, never implicated [Fall River Ridge Report](#), in which I survey the fall decorating and gardening habits of my (former) neighbors in South Elgin, Illinois. Spoiler alert: It was both down AND up. At the same time. Wild!



If you missed it above, read it [HERE](#). Or [CLICK](#) the picture.

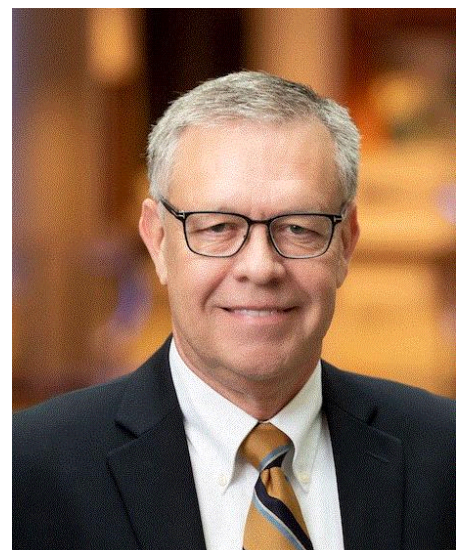
Ken Fisher to step aside as AmericanHort leader

After a decade of solid leadership, AmericanHort President & CEO Ken Fisher says he plans on stepping away from his role at the end of May 2026 in order to pursue new professional opportunities—presumably within the industry, as he states in the press release, "... and continue contributing to the industry in new ways." In other words, don't call it a retirement.

"AmericanHort is strong, forward-looking and well-positioned for the future," Ken stated. "As we mark 10 years of progress together, I believe now is the right time for new leadership, new energy and new ideas to carry the organization forward."

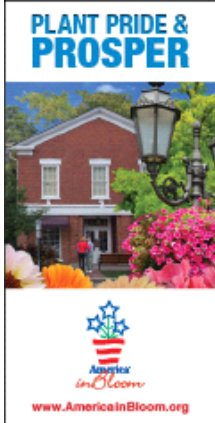
Ken came to our industry and AmericanHort in 2016, after more than 20 years with consumer companies, including The Coleman Company and Elmer's Products.

"Ken's leadership over the past decade has been extraordinary," said Kent Fullmer, Chair of the AmericanHort Board of Directors. "He guided the organization through an era of growth, strengthened its financial foundation, expanded its national influence and positioned AmericanHort as the leading voice for the horticulture industry. We are grateful for his vision and his steady hand, and we look forward to working with him to ensure a smooth and successful transition."



The AmericanHort Board of Directors will immediately begin the process of planning for the CEO

GrowerTalks Magazine,
Ball Horticultural
Company, BASF &
AmericanHort are
happy to present:



transition and the selection of the next leader. As mentioned, Ken will continue in his role through May 2026 to ensure continuity and a smooth handoff.



Brad news is good news

Just over a year ago, I published pictures of damage caused by a tornado hitting Brad's Bedding in Fort Pierce, Florida. What added insult to injury was that the tornado was spawned by Hurricane Milton—which never got within 75 miles of Fort Pierce. It was those long, spiraling tentacles of wind and rain that stretched from the storm that caused the rash of tornadoes that hit the east coast of Florida. Brad's was in the way of one. Thankfully, he had his main location further south in Delray Beach to keep supplying customers. But he lost 25 acres of shade and greenhouse and hundreds of thousands of bedding plants and poinsettias—about \$1.5 million in crop loss alone.



But recently, I saw on Facebook that Brad and his team had gotten the site back in shape, so I drove down this week to check it out and get some photos to show you what a happy ending to a sad story looks like.

Brad, who was a bit frustrated in 2024, as you can imagine, is a fair bit happier today, what with being up and running and able to supply his landscape, IGC and resort customers from both locations. Brad told me that after the storm he had offers from developers (who probably thought he'd sell cheap), but he chose to rebuild. Sales are strong (up 10% a year or more) and demand remains strong—he really seems bullish on the Florida market!



As you can see from this aerial shot right after the storm, not much was salvageable.

“Where do you begin—that’s the problem,” Brad said of the mess. “We had plastic and shade everywhere ... it was in our trees ... it took us a month because it was so wrapped up and twisted up in them.”

Fortunately, Brad had recently signed up for the H-2A guestworker program and his first employees had arrived in August. They proved invaluable, working nonstop, and filling dozens of 40-yard Dumpsters with debris, and getting a shadehouse up and running by December, which they filled with fern baskets for some quick cashflow. Brad lived onsite nearly every day for weeks, he said—he has five bedrooms, plus facilities in the office for himself and staff from his Delray Beach location to save on hotel or rental costs.

The beautiful thing is, Brad said he didn’t have to touch his line of credit. Much of the rebuilding was paid for by crop insurance, the Hurricane Insurance Program (HIP-WI, which pays the crop insurance deductible) and a zero-interest government loan.

“The crop insurance has saved me,” he said. “Those policies are there for a reason. If you don’t do it, you’re a fool, when you have this kind of investment.”

When I spoke to him a year ago, Brad said, “I’m just worn out with this business.” As I said, he’s not nearly as down now, but the rebuilding wasn’t easy.

“This whole thing with the hurricane has probably taken a few years off my life,” he said with a smile. “But you’re either growing or you’re dying.”



Poinsettias at Brad’s

Brad and I talked about every topic under the sun for about three hours (including how he got his start in the business at a Home Depot garden center, which is where he discovered how many landscapers were in need of bedding plants), but then he had to put out a fire, so his son, Bradley, gave me the driving tour of the new shadehouses and greenhouse.

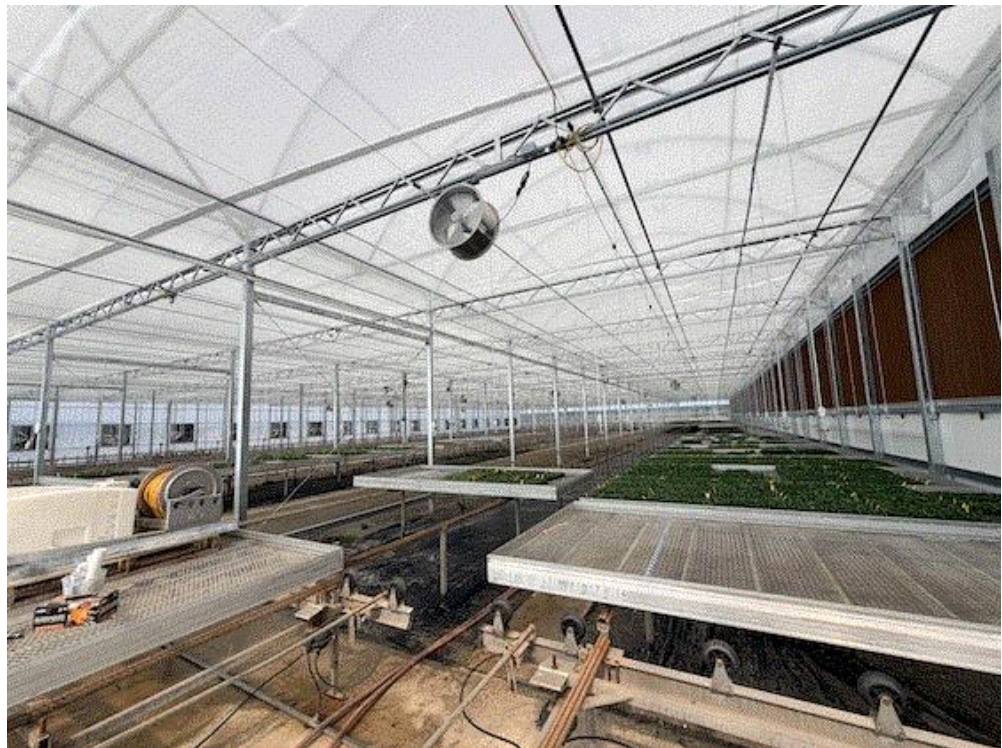
Taking advantage of the chance to upgrade during the rebuild, Brad has added Wire Products’

wire nursery benching to all the shadehouses to get the plants off the ground (the property is quite low). You've seen these—galvanized wire into which the pots fit, so they don't blow over.



Ice Crystal Poinsettias securely held by the new wire benches.

The new propagation greenhouse (from Beijing Sunrise Greentech) also got some upgrades: It's 2 ft. taller than the previous one, with a larger loading area up front, a retractable shade curtain, and fan-and-pad cooling.



For a Florida shadehouse crop grown under natural conditions, the poinsettias were looking very nice! Some were about to be sleeved for a trip to Disney the next day. Variety-wise, Christmas Magic (Selecta) is their #1 red for 4 in. and 6.5 in., followed by Red Soul (Dümnen).



Christmas Magic Red in 6.5-in. pots. These were headed to Disney the next day.

For 10-in. reds, it's Christmas Spirit (Selecta) and Imperial (Dümmen), plus a few Ferrara (Dümmen), Prestigious (Dümmen) and Elegance Red (Selecta).

For colors, Early Elegance and Elegance White and Pink, plus Princettia Hot Pink, Pink and Pure White (Suntory). I also spotted some Ice Crystal (Dümmen).

And according to their grow list, they're trialing some Selecta varieties in 10 in.



... and what young Bradley likes about the business

While we rode, I took the opportunity to ask 20-year-old Bradley if he was planning on following in his dad's footsteps and making the nursery business his career. He is, he said, and has already been working in the business at both locations for more than two years. Considering that he's already witnessed one of the worst disasters that can happen to a nursery, I give him credit for still wanting to make this his life.



Young Bradley shows off a 6.5-in. Christmas Magic, one of their key reds.

"I know how profitable it can be ... I also know how not profitable it can be," he said. "[Despite the tornado], last year was still a great year. We were still up from the year before and this year we are up tremendously ... I do like it. It's a great business to be in."

I asked him to be more specific.

"Being outside, being able to see things grow, it's very gratifying, knowing it came from you, you were able to make it happen, when it gets to the garden center and the people really enjoy it. You can take pride in your product because it makes other people happy."

And as for his niche within the business?

"I like selling. I do like the structures and helping construction and things like that, too, but I like reaching out to customers to see how I can help them."

Isn't it great to see the next generation embracing the industry we love?



IGCA gets new U.S. representative

Was it coincidence or kismet that I mentioned the [International Garden Centre Association's](#) recent tour of South Africa in last week's newsletter? Because our dear friend Kellee (Magee) O'Reilly of MonkeyBar Management (and formerly of ANLA, where you may know her from) read it and immediately wrote in to tell me her big news: After a unanimous vote, the IGCA Board of Directors has recognized [Your MarketMetrics](#) as the official organizational representative for the U.S., replacing AmericanHort, which opted to step away from that role. Kellee, as founder of Your MarketMetrics, was named as the U.S. Administrator for IGCA ... actually named once again because she held that role from 2004-2007 when ANLA was the U.S. Administrator.

Kellee explained that this came through her long friendship and working relationship with Michael Bracken, co-owner of IGC Nicholson-Hardie in Dallas, Texas, and just-named First Vice President of the IGCA Board. Upon learning that AmericanHort was resigning from its administration seat, Michael reached out to Kellee to see if Your MarketMetrics might be able to fill the gap. Your MarketMetrics (which also includes well-traveled team members Ian Baldwin and Dr. Charlie Hall) applied earlier this year, and the Board gave them the thumbs up at the IGCA Congress in South Africa a couple weeks ago.

Kellee wasn't there, but she has attended IGCA tours in the past—her first, she said, was Ireland in 1999 ... a tour Michael Bracken and his brother, Josh, were also on.

"While this was a wholly-unexpected opportunity, it is one that we welcome," Kellee said in the official press release. "Our entire team believes in the power of community and that travel can spark fresh ideas and perspectives. There is much to be learned from how other countries approach garden retailing. We cannot imagine the USA not having representation within this valuable global community, and we look forward to exploring future collaborations to benefit U.S.-based independent garden retailers."

Added Michael Bracken, "IGCA has been an important part of our family's business history, and in fact one of the most professionally and personally rewarding things I have ever participated in. I am grateful that the USA will continue to be officially represented and I strongly encourage my fellow U.S. independent garden retailers to consider participating."

The next IGCA Congress will be held in [Munich, Germany](#), August 16-22, 2026.

Well done, Kellee! If anyone can inspire American garden center folks to attend, you can. And as the ultimate party planner, if and when it's finally time for the IGCA to come back to the U.S. for a tour (the last was 2005, in Chicago), you will make it the IGC event of a lifetime!

Kellee notes that if you're a subscriber to Your MarketMetrics financial benchmarking service, you'll now have access to new IGCA benefits, including country reports and exchange opportunities. IGCA connection subscriptions will be available in 2026 and U.S. firms can attend future IGCA Congress events without participating in financial benchmarking.



Woody ornamental news from Bailey ...

Some news from the world of shrubbery, where Bailey and Star Roses & Plants announced some new hires and promotions.

Bailey Nurseries, the fifth-generation nursery business headquartered in St Paul, Minnesota, and known for Endless Summer Hydrangeas, First Editions Shrubs & Trees and Easy Elegance Roses, has just announced the appointment of AJ Lambert (right) as Chief Sales Officer. AJ comes to Bailey from Container Centralen (CC Racks), where he was Chief Commercial Officer. AJ brings plenty of experience in logistics and the livegoods supply chain. At Bailey, AJ will lead the sales organization with a focus on building lasting customer relationships, expanding market opportunities and supporting Bailey's mission to inspire growth at every level of the horticulture industry.



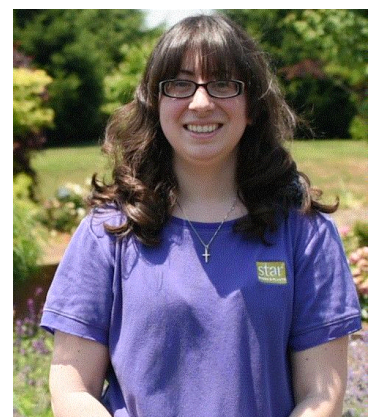
Dan Heintz, a 24-year Bailey veteran, has been promoted to Sales Manager – Mass Merchant, and Bret Poi and Rhett Pasour join as Territory Sales Representatives in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, respectively. Bret brings more than 30 years of experience in various green industry roles to his position. Rhett earned a B.S. in Horticultural Science and Plant Biology before gaining valuable retail and grower experience within the industry.

An advertisement for Star Roses & Plants. On the left is a photograph of a Nandina 'Tuscan Flame' shrub with variegated red, orange, and green leaves. On the right is a dark green background with the text: "star® ROSES and PLANTS", "Nandina 'Tuscan Flame'", "Multicolor, low-maintenance evergreen", and a white button that says "ORDER NOW".

... and from Star

Star Roses & Plants of West Grove, Pennsylvania, and home of Knock Out and Drift Roses, and Bushel and Berry edibles, has restructured its woody ornamentals team with two promotions and a new hire.

Kristen Pullen (right) has been promoted to Director of Woody Products and will be responsible for the overall strategy and performance of the woody plants program. Kristen has been with Star for more than a decade and "has tremendously impacted the development and growth of the woody program," they said.



Her previous role as Woody Portfolio Manager will be filled by long-time team member Mary Woolman. Mary will oversee the full pipeline for woody genetics, from trialing to introduction.

To fill the newly created Woody Technical Advisor position, Star has hired Simon Traskey. Simon, formerly with Qualitree Propagators in British Columbia, was brought on to provide his wealth of technical knowledge to the company's sales team and external customers.



FFA honors Georgia Green Industry leader Lanie Riner

I spotted this on her Facebook page: Lanie Riner, Executive Director of the Georgia Green Industry Association (GGIA), was just given an Honorary American FFA Degree—the highest recognition bestowed by Future Farmers of America. It is reserved for individuals who “have provided exceptional service on a national level to agriculture, agricultural education or FFA.” It was presented to her at the organization’s 98th National Convention in Indianapolis October 29-November 1.



Lanie said she didn’t grow up as an FFA student—her school didn’t have a chapter—and she wasn’t even fully aware of what the organization stood for. But later, when she became a grower and then began working with GGIA, she witnessed firsthand how deeply FFA shapes the next generation of agricultural leaders.

“I’m deeply humbled by this recognition,” she wrote. “And filled with gratitude for those who built the path long before me.”

Congrats, Lanie!



Discover science-driven blends, reliable supply and expertise built for today's horticulture.

Sign up for your **FREE** grower trial today.



Five educational opportunities from AmericanHort

Here are five good reasons to be an [AmericanHort](#) member: Five educational opportunities coming up in the next few weeks. Click the titles to learn more and to see about registering.

Are Drones the Future for All Nurseries?

November 13, 1:00 p.m. Eastern

Join the AmericanHort Nursery Community Connectors to explore the growing role of drones in nursery operations. Hear from Kirk Floyd, a leading industry expert, who'll share the latest on drone technology, along with two nursery professionals who are already integrating drones into their daily workflows.

Building Teams Where Everyone Excels

November 19, 12:30 p.m. Eastern

Leadership coach Geneva McNeale explains what inclusive leadership looks like and provides practical strategies for reducing bias. Plus, learn ways to foster respect and belonging through real-world examples and interactive discussions.

PLUS! Listen live in English or switch to real-time Spanish interpretation.

¡ADEMÁS! Este webinar se ofrecerá con interpretación al español en vivo para quienes prefieran aprender en español.

Understanding and Managing the Two-Spotted Cotton Leafhopper

November 14, 11:00 a.m. Eastern

The two-spotted cotton leafhopper (also known as cotton jassid) is an emerging pest of growing concern for both cotton and ornamental plant production. Hear the latest research and management strategies to help growers identify, monitor and control this insect.

Mastering Career Development Planning

December 1, 8 and 15, 11:00 a.m. Eastern

Employees don't just want a job—they want a clear pathway for growth. This three-part series with Neal Glatt gives hiring managers and those in leadership positions the tools to design and implement a comprehensive career advancement plan for all staff, from entry-level to senior professionals.

Nature's Best Hope

December 2, 1:00 p.m. Eastern

The decline of North American birds reveals how poorly our landscapes sustain life. Dr. Doug Tallamy, Entomologist, Conservationist and Professor at the University of Delaware, shares how choosing the right plants can restore biodiversity, combat climate change and make us nature's best hope.

Finally ...



In response to the Fall River Ridge Report (and proving that we practice what we preach), Managing Editor Jen Polanz shared this photo of her fall/Halloween front porch display with the proud words, "... and not a mum in sight." Meaning that while seemingly everyone in River Ridge depends on mums for their color, Jen managed a great display without them by carrying her summer annuals over to the fall and adding a few embellishments for Halloween.

The theme is dark foliage, led by Wicked Witch Coleus (Proven Winners) and Treasure Island Manihi Ipomoea (Concept Plants). Lending a pop of color against the black is Beacon Bright Red Impatiens (PanAmerican Seed), iCandy Lemon Yellow Begonia (Syngenta) and a few dusty miller. And tucked in somewhere on the left is Plectranthus FanciFillers Guacamole (Westhoff).

Jen called out the ipomoea specifically, saying, "You can eat the leaves and it grows sweet potatoes. The other one I had only grew tiny sweet potatoes. I'm curious to pull this one out to see what I get."

Meanwhile, over on Adriana Heikkila's River Ridge front porch, she revealed her secret to chipmunk-proofing her urn: wooden skewers.



"It works," she said. "No more dirt all over the porch."

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

See you next time!

Chi

Chris Beytes

Editor-in-Chief
GrowerTalks & Green Profit

This e-mail received by 29,764 loyal readers!

Thanks to my loyal sponsors, who help me reach the 29,728 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.

