

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memoriam: Herman Hamer

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GrowerTalks was very saddened to hear the news that Herman Hamer, former CEO of his family's business, Florensis, passed away November 12 after a battle with cancer. He was just 60 years old.

Founded in 1941 as Hamer Bloemzaden by Herman's father, Jan, the company under Herman's leadership went on to become one of the largest horticultural firms in Europe, with production in Holland, Portugal, Kenya and Ethiopia. Herman was a pioneer in the bedding plant plug business in Europe. He was also a long-time supporter of Fleuroselect (equivalent to All-America Selections in the U.S.) and served as its president for many years.

Anna Ball was a long-time friend of Herman's and the two family businesses have a long, intertwined history. Herman was one of the first international interns at PanAmerican Seed, and eventually, three of his five children also interned at Ball.

In 2009, Ball and Florensis formed a partnership, with Florensis buying Ball's Dutch and German operations, and in exchange, Ball taking over Florensis' UK operation. Ball also gained a minority share in Florensis. More recently, the two companies started a breeding company called Toscana. Said Anna in a note to Ball employees, "Herman was a smart, determined, strategic man who always took the long view. He will be sorely missed."

Long-time Florensis manager Leo Hoogendoorn was appointed CEO of the company earlier this year. He spoke about Herman at a company memorial, saying that Herman had great confidence that the company would carry on well without his leadership. He joked frequently, "The less I interfere, the better things run here."

"He would then laugh heartily at his own expense," Leo said. "He had no shortage of self-deprecating humor and self-knowledge."

Added Leo with respect, "Despite all his business successes, Herman remained who he was: accessible and without airs and graces. Playing the big boss towards employees was never his thing. Herman was very modest and loved to see the people around him progress." **GT**