

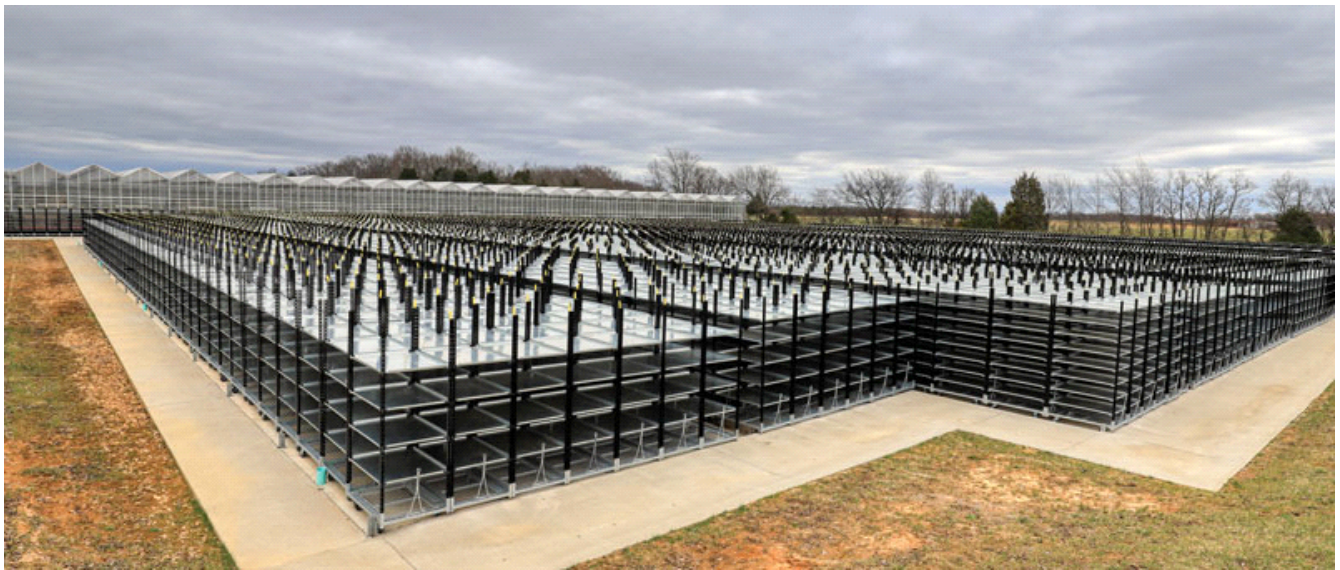
GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

4/1/2019

Rack 'em Up

Chris Beytes



Eight thousand shiny new shipping racks await the onslaught of spring at South Central Growers in Springfield, Tennessee. Brothers Tim, Ron and Alex Van Der Hengst (in inset, with Director of Sales Derek Clark), ordered the larger, 31-in. x 44 in.-size racks for the 2019 season, replacing their old fleet of 7,500 smaller 22 in. x 57 in. racks. The \$400 racks come from Heritage Greenhouse Products.

Why the change?

“Freight,” replied Ron. “With trucking costs rising drastically, we knew we had to increase the utilization of our trailers. We knew we needed to purchase more racks, so we took this opportunity to switch to a more efficient shipping rack.”



The new racks hold 20% more product, increasing the load each trailer carries and increasing space utilization in stores, where customers often merchandise on racks.

Also new at South Central: three new ISO Cutting Planters (again in the inset photo), which they installed in December and have run five days a week, 10 hours a day through peak planting time.

These are an investment in labor efficiency, requiring just three to four people vs. 17 people sticking by hand.

Ron says the robots can stick about 95% of the varieties they grow. Each machine can stick 2,600 cuttings per hour; they'll do over 4 million cuttings total in 2019, including 3 million spring annuals, 1 million fall mums and even some industrial hemp (a new business they're exploring). **GT**