

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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75 Years of Poinsettia Experience

Chris Beytes



Cousins Brett (left) and Mike Schaefer enjoy the ready-to-sell poinsettia crop at the family's Montgomery, Illinois, greenhouse on, as luck would have it, November 13, a Friday. We wanted to feature Schaefer's in our "In Brief" spread because the 94-year-old, fifth-generation business is up for sale and we thought this might be their last poinsettia crop.

"We don't think so," answered Brett, who said that, while it is on the market, they don't have any offers. "But never say never," he added. "Because somebody could come in and buy it. But if not, we're going to do another poinsettia crop next year."

With so much history, we asked the cousins how many poinsettia crops they'd grown in their careers? Mike calculated a bit in his head and came up with 45, having started growing with his dad after graduating high school in

the mid '70s. For Brett, it's just 30 or so crops.

Schaefer's made the local news this spring when a newspaper told the story of their Easter lily crop, which was destined for the compost pile when the pandemic put a stop to sales. The tale touched the heart of local residents, who flocked to the retail grower to buy plants for friends, neighbors, first responders and front-line workers. In the end, they miraculously sold all 10,000 plants. But that close call, plus the lack of poinsettia orders from customers due to the uncertainty of the times, led Mike to cut back his poinsettia order by 25% to 30%.

In hindsight? "I wish I would have grown more," Mike admits. "But, saying that, we're on the verge of being shut down again, so who knows." (At press time, the Illinois governor was contemplating another stay-at-home order.)

But Brett added, "The way I look at it, if we need product, I know several growers who have some. If we need to fill orders, we can just buy them in and satisfy our customers." **GT**