

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Grimes to Close

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The news about Grimes Horticulture of Concord, Ohio, came in an email to a few suppliers from co-owner Gary Grimes, who wrote the following:

After 95 years in business, Grimes Horticulture is shutting down. Grimes managed the timing of this carefully and have paid over 95% of our obligations to vendors.

We are extremely proud of our exceptional employees, who have been as dedicated and productive as any company could possibly ask for.

Owners Gary Grimes and Rod LeDrew will assist our employees to help seek new positions of employment. Grimes will see that plant orders, already placed for the current season, will be fulfilled. We will also follow up to assist with seed orders that have been placed with us. Questions should be directed to Bill Steen.

We could not be more appreciative of our wonderful, valued customers, who will be intensely missed. It has been an honor to get to know and work with so many of you in this wonderful industry.

What the announcement didn't say was why? Why suddenly close a 95-year-old business. Why not at least try to sell it?

The answer came in an email from Gary after I dropped him a line, inquiring as to the rest of the story. I was shocked to read his answer.

"Our closing is the result of an embezzlement, which was too large for the company to financially digest," wrote Gary, adding, "I don't want to discuss who the embezzler is or the amount."

He continued, "Bill Steen, our president, has accepted another position in the industry, as have some of our employees." (Bill's new position is at Fleurizon International, where's he's general manager.)

Gary didn't say anything more than that, and a Google search didn't turn up any details of the crime, so there's nothing else I can share at this point.

For background, Gary came to Grimes by purchasing it. Actually, he purchased H.G. German Seeds in 1984 and renamed the company. H.G. German was founded in 1926. That would make Grimes technically 94 years old, not the 95 that Gary referenced, but then I learned that Grimes is a DBA ("doing business as") and the real company name is Gardenlife Inc., which Google says is in the business of "wholesale distribution of animal feeds, fertilizers, agricultural chemicals and other farm supplies." Gardenlife was founded in 1925—which WAS 95 years ago. **GT**