

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Meet the Latest EAGL Class

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Pictured: The Executive Academy for Growth & Leadership (EAGL) Iota cohort received certifications on February 4 in Dripping Springs, Texas. (L to R): Dr. Charlie Hall (faculty), Alan Jones, Ryan Hop, Karin Walters, Andy Aiken, Becky Thomas, Farai Madziva, Bob Blew and Kellee O'Reilly (faculty).

Dr. Charlie Hall (the Ellison Chair for International Floriculture at Texas A&M) announced the graduation of the eighth cohort of his elite “Executive Academy for Growth & Leadership” (EAGL) program for nursery and greenhouse growers. The “Iota” class of seven industry leaders received their Certificate in Applied Horticultural Business Management from TAMU on February 4 despite the challenges of the pandemic.

COVID-19 forced this year's class into a series of accommodations, including more intense Zoom-based sessions and physical distancing, testing, masks and outdoor environments when they could meet in person.

Faculty Lead and EAGL Founder Dr. Hall comments, "I am very proud of the work that this year's cohort put into the planning efforts for their businesses and the innovative thinking that was generated in our meetings. This was a diverse group from several different types and sizes of growing operations that sold into diverse retail venues, so there was a lot of 'outside-the-box' sharing and insights that were generated."

This year's class (or "cohort" as it's called) included:

- Alan Jones, Manor View Farms, Maryland
- Andy Aiken, Grower Direct Farms, Connecticut and Maine
- Becky Thomas, Spring Grove Nursery, Illinois
- Bob Blew, Centerton Nursery, New Jersey
- Farai Madziva, Kitayama Bros Farms, California
- Karin Walters, Walters Gardens, Michigan
- Ryan Hop, Walters Gardens, Michigan

Projects were judged by W.J. Rossi of Koss Olinger Financial and Ed Bales of Motorola University (retired). **GT**