

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In the Bag

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Visitors to Midwest Trading get educated by horticultural Soil Scientist Kevin Donnelly, who explains what goes into producing the various bagged goods offered by the Chicago-area horticultural supplier. The guests were on location to help the company celebrate its 40th year in business.

As you might guess from the name, Midwest Trading is a division of Midwest Groundcovers, a well-known groundcover, shrub and perennial grower based in St. Charles and Virgil, Illinois, founded in 1969 by Peter Orum and his wife Irma. Peter was on hand to tell the story of how he was pushed into starting the hardgoods supply company by customers, who, as they were picking up plants from the nursery, were constantly asking if they could buy some bales of peat moss, too.

Peter always said “No, we are in the plant business, not the peat moss business. Besides, we need it for our own production.”

One customer, however, wouldn't take no for an answer and basically ordered Peter to sell him some peat moss or risk losing the business. Peter got the message, a light bulb went on over his head, and in 1981, Midwest Trading was born.

Today, Midwest bags their own materials and mixes on a form, fill and seal line that can produce upwards of a million bags per year. But that's not enough—by next year, they'll have replaced it with at least one new line (possibly two and there's room for three) capable of 2.5 to 3 million bags per shift, greatly increasing their output and efficiency. In addition, they'll upgrade their batch-testing facilities. We can't wait to see the new line(s) when they come online next summer! **GT**

