

# GROWERTALKS

## GT in Brief

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## Suntory Flowers Names GM for North America

*Chris Beytes*



Suntory Flowers has named T. Jay Higgins general manager for North America. T. Jay, a long-time business partner of Suntory, is owner of Sun-Fire Nurseries in Sarasota, Florida. Sun-Fire and Suntory have worked closely on product development, and industry promotions and exhibitions for 16 years. Sun-Fire is the top producer of Sun Parasol Mandevillas, and also produces Brindabella and Sunrosa Roses, a newer category for Suntory.

T. Jay says the new gig won't affect business at Sun-Fire.

"I am very excited for the new opportunity with Suntory, but it would not be an option without having great people at Sun-Fire," he said in the press release. "Terri Kelley, my GM, and Paul Cummiskey, head grower, and others make it possible for me to pursue other goals. I will always have an eye on the big picture at Sun-Fire, but I am really looking forward to working with the full Suntory line and continuing to grow the North American market. I have a lot to learn and will be leaning on the great team already in place as we look to strengthen current relationships and build new ones."

Masashi Matsumura, executive general manager, says hiring T. Jay as general manager is a natural progression in the marriage.

"Although Sun Parasol is his main business, T. Jay has supported all of Suntory's business as if he was on our team," Masa said.

As far as the timing, global conditions made this change necessary. "Due to the pandemic, I have not been able to come to the States for a year and a half," Masa says. "T. Jay will be the right person to lead a team that's responsive to the local market and take our business to the next level."

Suntory Flowers' North American team includes Delilah Onofrey, marketing director, Lorentina McKoy, sales and product representative, and Gail Pabst, marketing assistant. **GT**