

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

3/1/2022

Flipping Foliage in Pennsylvania

Chris Beytes



“A key to greenhouse profitability is flipping your bench space,” says Aimee (Musselman) Rohrbach, co-owner (with her brother, Andy) of Musselman Wholesale Foliage, Inc.

“We sell about 5,000 6-in. spaths a year,” she continued in explanation. “Even if I’m only making \$2 a turn, I’m not making that kind of money on my 6-in. poinsettias that sit on my tables from August 1 to December 23!”

Located in the small south-central Pennsylvania town of Cashtown, not far from Gettysburg, the Musselman family has been wholesaling foliage since 1976, when

Aimee’s dad, Dave, began selling terrarium plants at his parents’ florist shop. When a local wholesaler went out of business, he got into the wholesale dish garden business and they’ve been doing dish gardens ever since—50,000 per year during the peak and about 30,000 a year now, all made in-house.

Aimee and Andy bought the business from their dad in January 2021 to continue the tradition. While it may have been scary to take on ownership of the business during a pandemic, strong sales have helped ease the pain. In a recent Tropical Topics newsletter, Aimee told editor Ellen Wells that they sold about 258,000 foliage plants and dish gardens in 2019. That number jumped to 415,000 in 2020 and more than 520,000 in 2021, taking foliage and dish gardens from just under 50% to 70% of annual sales.

“When people can’t visit, can’t go to funerals, they send plants!” she says.



As for how they find enough product in a tight foliage market to bring in a truckload a week from Florida 51 weeks a year, Aimee credits the following: “We have the longevity of buying foliage for almost 46 years. I pay my Florida vendors as soon as I get the invoice in because I think fast-paying helps you garnish better product. [And] we don’t complain a whole lot—there are probably times I could complain a little more ... but not from most of our vendors.” **GT**