

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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In Memoriam: Phil Cialone

Chris Beytes



Phil Cialone, a pioneer and leader in the Florida foliage industry, passed away September 16 after a long battle with a rare disease called progressive supranuclear palsy. He was 82.

Phil and his brothers Joe and Paul grew up in New Jersey and all received horticulture degrees from Rutgers. After graduation, Phil became a vocational ag teacher at Manasquan High School on the Jersey

shore. In 1968, he moved to Florida and became manager of Dot and Ed's Green Thumb Nursery in Delray Beach. Three years later, he, Joe and Paul started Tropical Ornamentals in Florida and Tropic Greenhouses in New Jersey.

Pictured: Phil Cialone (left) with his brothers Paul and Joe, about five years ago

Throughout his career, from the '60s to the '90s, Phil was a leader and innovator. He helped found the Florida Foliage Association and was its first president. He battled for the appropriate definition of shadehouses as temporary structures when the Palm Beach County Commissioners wanted to classify them as permanent structures. He was a strong proponent of marketing and promotion of the foliage industry, and was the first president of the Horticultural Marketing Council after its formation in 1986. Even before then, his efforts for the industry had not gone unnoticed, as he was awarded the Foliage Hall of Fame award in 1984, the youngest person ever to receive this award.

After Phil left Tropical Ornamentals in the early '90s he formed Outrageous Tropicals, specializing in supplying plant material to botanical gardens and zoos. His special passion with large plant material made him become one of the nation's leading experts on the growing, handling and shipping of large material for use in buildings. The Opryland Hotel in Nashville became a landmark installation for the Interior Landscape Industry and Phil was a large part of that project. **GT**