

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

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Endowment Established in Memory of Russell Weiss

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There's now an endowment honoring the late Russell Weiss of Kurt Weiss Green-houses on Long Island, who passed away in June of 2021 at the age of 85. To honor Russell's legacy to New York's horticulture industry, Russell's family has established a \$100,000 endowment to Cornell University's Long Island Horticultural Research & Extension Center (LIHREC) in Riverhead, New York.

The Russell Weiss Endowment will be managed by Cornell University; the principal from this endowed fund is reserved and protected in perpetuity to allow the account to grow. The interest from the endowment will be used to support the LIHREC's research and extension programs.

Russell began working in the greenhouse industry alongside his grandfather Otto and father Kurt at an early age, growing azaleas in Queens, New York. He went on to study at Cornell, graduating in 1957, and then completed graduate studies at the University of Maryland. Eventually, Russell and his father branched out to begin the present-day company, Kurt Weiss Greenhouses, Inc., headquartered in Center Moriches on Long Island. Under Russell's leadership, the company expanded from growing azaleas for New York City to a full-fledged growing operation producing azaleas, hydrangeas, annuals, perennials, tropical plants and more. Russell served as President and CEO from 1972 until handing the company off to the next generation in 2016. A large part of Russell's legacy lives on through the company, now in its fifth generation.

Russell owned V & V Noordland Greenhouses, an engineering and construction company that was responsible for building greenhouses around the world, notably the construction of "The Land" at Epcot Center in 1983. He also built greenhouses for Cornell.

In addition to his business responsibilities, Russell was an industry leader. He served a term as President of the Long Island Flower Growers Association, was a member of the Board of Directors of Rabobank, and was on the Board of Directors of the Seeley Conference at Cornell.

Dr. Mark Bridgen, Director of Cornell's LIHREC, said: "Russell was an impressive man! I was always amazed when he walked in the door of our Center carrying a sick plant to show our plant pathologist Margery Daughtry. What was the president of such a powerful greenhouse operation doing delivering his own plant samples for diagnosis? Russell was always interested in learning, and he wanted to hear directly what Margery or Dan Gilrein, our entomologist, had to say about how he could manage a pest problem. He gathered data before making decisions. We are extremely grateful for Russell's family's generosity, and think that this is a great way to honor and remember Russell, as well as to celebrate our Center's 100th anniversary." **GT**