

GROWERTALKS

GT in Brief

2/1/2023

Hoffman Nursery Owner Retiring After 40-plus Years

Jennifer Zurko



Hoffman Nursery announced the retirement of co-owner John Hoffman as of January 1, 2023. Co-Owner Jill Hoffman will remain as President and CEO, and David Hoffman will continue as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

"I speak for all employees when I say we will miss seeing John every day at the nursery, but we are grateful to continue his legacy of growing good grass," said David.

John has spent over 40 years in the horticulture industry. In 1981, he started a design-installation firm called Landscapes by Hoffman. Shortly afterward, he discovered ornamental grasses. Grasses weren't widely used in the U.S. in the 1980s, however, Europe had already embraced them.

John traveled to Germany and was fortunate to meet with the late plant breeder, Ernst Pagels. Pagels' enthusiasm for grasses and grass-filled gardens kindled John's interest. John also gained inspiration from his mentor, the late J.C. Raulston at North Carolina State University. J.C. believed grasses would become popular and encouraged John to pursue his interest. The more John learned, the more his passion for grasses intensified.

In partnership with his wife, Jill, John transitioned from landscaping to growing in 1986. Hoffman Nursery was established on a 45-acre former tobacco farm in rural Rougemont, North Carolina. John personally delivered their first crops—grasses in large, finished sizes—in rented box trucks. Before long, the Hoffmans constructed their first hoophouse, which allowed them to work through the intricacies of producing small, liner plants.

Now Hoffman Nursery ships liners to wholesale customers across the United States and Canada. An advanced production and growing facility, stock farm and dedicated shipping areas help Hoffman Nursery fulfill its mission to produce high-quality plants.

John said, "I've had a lot of fun over the past decades with trade shows, conferences and travel to nurseries, gardens and other places around the world. Meeting many great friends and colleagues in this industry has been the highlight of the last 40-plus years for me.

"While I am retiring from the nursery, I'm not going too far—I expect to be at trade shows, and travel to visit customers and friends for years to come. I look forward to finding new plants and ideas to bring back to the nursery. In addition, I have a long list of home projects to do, as well as two new grandsons to teach how to build a fire, go

camping and enjoy the outdoors." **GT**