

# GROWERTALKS

## Inside Look

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## Always Positively Optimistic

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**JENNIFER ZURKO**

Every year, at all of the early winter trade shows, we like to gauge the mood of the industry. This year, Chris Beytes and Matthew Chappell meandered down the aisles of TPIE, MANTS and IPM Essen, looking for new stuff and chatting up the booth folks.

They did find some interesting products (don't they always?) and had some good conversations. It seemed that both exhibitors and attendees at those shows were in pretty good moods, despite last spring not being up to par—mostly because of the weather. It wouldn't have been surprising if people were feeling pessimistic about the upcoming spring, but that doesn't seem to be the case.

Matthew said MANTS “seemed to have that pre-COVID excitement fully back. Most people (vendors and attendees) were in a good mood with positive expectations for 2023.”

Of TPIE, Chris said he heard the term “cautiously optimistic” a couple of times, but he felt, overall, that the mood was a bit better than that. People were saying that as long as the weather cooperates, everything should be great.

A similar theme of “careful” was what Chris was hearing overseas in Germany at IPM. European companies have had a worse go of it than North American growers—dealing with inflation, but also being affected by the war in Ukraine and natural gas prices that have risen to 10 times their normal price. He said the war seemed to concern them more than energy or labor costs because of the fluidity of the situation (it can change for the better or worse at any moment). And for many growers and suppliers, a major market in Russia was completely cut off.

Still, despite all of this, Chris said they remain optimistic. As long as the weather cooperates.

“Yes, we're back to talking about weather as the key to our success!” said Chris. Good weather usually follows suit with good consumer demand, regardless of economic, social and political issues.

But aren't hort industry folks always optimistic? A few operations I've visited during the last couple of months said the same thing: they're “cautiously optimistic” about Spring 2023. Why do I feel like I hear this every year?

Maybe because being doom-and-gloom takes a lot of mental and emotional energy. And who has time for that when some of the things that dictate our seasonal sales outcome is out of our control (the weather, the economy)?

So an optimistic bunch, we are. It certainly makes for more pleasant trade show exchanges and conversations in the greenhouse. Nobody goes out of their way to hang with Debbie Downer.

See what Chris, Matthew and I (from the Great Lakes Expo) saw during the winter trade shows. And go to *Green Profit* to see all the products ideal for retailers.

We've also got information on how to add a retail component to your wholesale operation, finding the sweet spot in using multiple PGRs and understanding payroll taxes.

When there's no crystal ball or relying completely on the Farmers' Almanac to help us predict the weather (don't read this year's prediction—it'll depress you), the next best thing is to be hopeful. I think that's a good strategy for a lot of situations in life. **GT**