



Bulletin

The Information Source for the Floriculture Industry Since 1929

CIRCULATE

Pricing for Profit

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Calculating the costs and setting a price for the potted flowers we grow and sell has become an increasingly difficult task over the last several years. The market that helped make White's Nursery a success has dramatically changed and is continuing to change more and more as every week passes. At least for White's, understanding the changing marketplace is central in the ability to set pricing of our potted flowering plants.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

White's Nursery produces and sells into a mature market-

place. During the late '70s and early '80s, the marketplace for potted flowers was growing by leaps and bounds as supermarkets opened floral shops in many of their outlets. Supermarket floral buyers made purchasing decisions for all of their locations with mass buys and forced distributions. Both provided great opportunities for any company that grew potted flowering plants.

A CHANGE IN BUYERS

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, a gradual change took place in who actually made the ultimate decision on how many potted flowering plants to place in a store. Supermarket floral buyers became gatekeepers rather than buyers. Today, just like before, the supermarket floral

buyer decides which growers to purchase products from and which products and programs they'll promote. Like before they still seek the best products that offer the best value. However, most supermarket floral buyers no longer decide how many total cases to purchase from week to week. The products and programs are offered out to the floral clerks at store level. The floral clerks at the store level fill out survey sheets and ultimately decide how many cases of product to order. Unfortunately, purchase decisions are often made to limit

shrink instead of in an attempt to increase sales.

FLORAL PROGRAMS HAVE TO PAY FOR THEMSELVES

During the late '80s and early '90s, supermarkets had finished adding floral shops into their locations. Floral sales had increased to a point that most supermarkets had established a separate floral department to coordinate the purchase and promotion of all flowering products. With the creation of floral departments and assigned hours to floral shops at the store level,

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WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

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2002 marks the 25th year of my association with the Ohio Florists' Association. George Staby and Harry Tayama had come to a conference in St. Louis on post-production treatment of flowering plants and cut flowers. I was so hungry for answers, and so insistent that these two professors had them, that Harry thrust an application in my hands, made me give him \$15 and enrolled me in an association about which I still have to explain its relation to interior plantscaping in Missouri. It was probably the best money I have ever invested, as I learned that no one really had the answers, but many

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OFA Mission Statement

To support and promote floriculture professionals through life-long learning, career enhancement, and public awareness.
(As adopted by the OFA Board of Directors 2/24/02)



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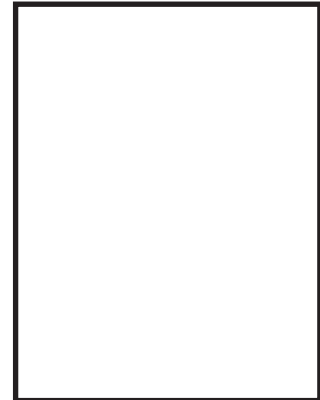
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AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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John R. Holmes

John Holmes has settled into his new role as executive director of the Ohio Florists' Association. Back in early March, I caught up with him in the OFA office for an interview to share his ideas for taking our association to its next level.

ROLE OF ENABLER

One question I asked was what personal goals he has set for himself during his appointment. His response was simple and eloquent. He didn't want to talk about personal goals, but instead stated that his main goal is to put the association in a position to serve its members. John's prior employment experiences have been in association management and working with non-profit organizations. Managing these organizations simply means doing what's needed to enable the group to serve its members.

While he doesn't have experience in the floriculture industry, he does understand how to make an association run on all cylinders. During his first month on the job John started immersing himself in our industry by attending grower meetings, visiting greenhouses, and interacting with OFA members. In his words, "I'm never going to be a subject matter expert. I'm hoping to just get a reasonable working knowledge and vocabulary to help tie it all together." He continued by saying, "I want to make it very clear that it's important I spend time with the membership, and try to understand, at some small level, what they do day to day. That ensures that what we do ties into what our members need."

ARE WE GROWERS OR MARKETERS?

Greenhouse operators are living through a significant shift in their professional lives. Years ago it was sufficient to grow a quality plant. Nice looking plants sold themselves, there was much less competition, and prices were set practically wherever the grower chose. Today, marketing our crops takes as much effort as growing them, and many growers are scurrying to

acquire business skills that their operations are lacking.

Some may conclude that John's present lack of floriculture knowledge could hamper his ability to lead the association successfully. While it's true that his strength is in management, he is already acquiring the working knowledge of floriculture to be effective. The analogy of my learning marketing and John learning floriculture puts things in focus. I'm confident that my business will be successful with my acquisition of a working knowledge of marketing just as John is learning about the floriculture industry.

ASSOCIATION MANAGEMENT

Another question I asked John was to compare the Alliance of Indiana Rural Water, where he served as executive director, to OFA and the floriculture industry. His response: "The parallels between that association and OFA are ironic. Though not an all-inclusive list, it's interesting to me that both serve groups diverse in size and resources, everything from large corporations to small-town, family-like operations, both are deeply committed to providing professional development opportunities, both provide important – yet often underrated – products and services that impact the quality of our lives, and both have dedicated members and staff.

"One key difference is that OFA has had, and continues to have, the ability to reach beyond a single state's boundary to have a positive and productive impact on its profession and industry. Although serving the continuing needs of our Ohio membership is of utmost importance, that extended national and international reach is exciting and certainly one of many reasons I view this as a great opportunity."

WHAT IS OFA?

Most of us would answer this question by stating the obvious, that OFA is an association of floriculturists. Most of us would state that what makes us successful in our own greenhouses, garden centers, retail florist shops, and interiorscape businesses also makes OFA succeed. To a certain point this statement is true, but John has a deeper interpretation of what OFA is. "OFA, while it is involved very deeply in floriculture, is not a green-



house, is not a garden center, and is not a retail florist. It is none of those entities that we are serving. It is a non-profit association, and because of that it has its own unique set of dynamics, its own requirements, and its

own issues it needs to deal with."

HELPING ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

John's closing comments indicate that we are in very capable hands. "At the end of the day, it's not about my goals. It's about our members' goals, their vision, what they need. So, we're going to be taking our lead and direction from them. For me, what's important is that we have the infrastructure in place to support what they need. What does that mean? It means we're putting resources into the staff, technology and the physical plant, and the governance structure, so we have the talent, tools, background, and commitment to get this job done. As far as my goals, they are going to be to try to make certain we continue to invest the resources necessary in those areas, so that the infrastructure is there to support the members' goals."

When discussing OFA's history and tradition, John had the following comments. "One thing that has been very impressive to me is the very long tradition – basically three quarters of a century – in trying to meet educational, professional development goals, to really focus on supporting the individual in his or her pursuit of the floriculture profession. Just to see the consistency of that in everything from the Articles of Incorporation and the bullet points outlined by those incorporators, to today and what we're doing with the Short Course and other activities."

Speaking both as an OFA member and part-time staff member, our association is about to take its next step forward. John knows how to help us do this successfully. He also realizes that the association needs the right resources and technical expertise to help its members thrive. Dennis Kirven brought his unique set of talents to us during his appointment. Under Dennis' leadership, OFA has been able to position itself as a national association. John's set of talents is unique also. If it's true that a team takes on the personality of its coach, OFA's been very fortunate to have Dennis, and now John, serve in that role.

OFA

Challenges Facing the Small to Medium Grower: One Company's Story

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In 1895, a young German immigrant by the name of John Grande joined forces with his brother and started a small farm/greenhouse operation known as Grande Farms. That company grew vegetables and flowers to be sold at the City Market House in downtown Indianapolis, Indiana. As times changed, the company devoted more effort to flowers than vegetables. By the

1920s, only flowers were produced on the site, and business was pretty good. Edward C. Grande and his sister Clara took over after their father's heart attack. Clara focused on the retail florist segment of the business, and Eddie was a wholesale flower grower. The two went separate business directions shortly after taking over the family business.

In the middle part of the last century, my grandfather

(Ed Grande, Sr.) was a highly respected pot plant grower. Chrysanthemum, poinsettia, azalea, hydrangea, Dutch bulbs, and of course bedding plants could be found in his greenhouses and cold frames at the appropriate time of year. He had dabbled in green plants (foliage) for years, but only as a sideline to his wonderful pots of flowers. In 1952, he decided to leave the potted blooming plant

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CHALLENGES FACING THE SMALL TO MEDIUM GROWER: ONE COMPANY'S STORY

Continued from page 3

business and become a foliage plant grower. This was unheard of in his time and location; many of his colleagues thought he was crazy! In fact, there were some years the business struggled during the early 1960s; however, Ed Grande, Sr. stuck to his vision of year-round foliage plant production. About 1968, something the foliage plant world calls "the boom" started. Grandpa actually predicted the plant boom in a letter to his customers circa 1955. Ed Grande became a genius and a visionary, having created a company with a market that for approximately 10 years was seemingly without boundary. Wow, have things changed since then!

How do visionaries predict the future? Insight, evaluation, and a little luck probably have something to do with it. How do we deal with the challenges that face our companies within the framework of the big picture? When do we make those major changes so we remain competitive in the marketplace and produce a return on investment, benefiting our employees and ourselves? These are easy questions to ask. However, they are tough questions to answer. Many growers/small business owners find it difficult enough to get the day's business completed. Time for out-of-the-box thinking is a luxury some find elusive at best. There is a cliché that states "Necessity is the mother of invention." For our company, a changing market forced us to rethink the business model that we had benefited from for so long.

Grandpa saw himself as

a wholesale florist. Until recently, a large percentage of our business came from purchases made by the traditional retail florist. As the market changed for the retail florist segment, so did their purchasing practices. Those changes, translated into decreased sales, forced us to look elsewhere for customers.

Becoming the leader of a mature company has its advantages; it also has its disadvantages. When a business model that has succeeded for many decades becomes less effective as a profit maker, one response is to try and fix what seems to be broken.

When our sales started to lag a little in the 1980s, we attempted to market our way out of the funk that we were finding ourselves in. What we failed to see, at first, was that the market we were servicing was changing. No matter how much we sold ourselves, our products, our services, and our prices, our current customer and product mix could only sustain less-than-adequate sales for our company. Simply put, foliage plants were in less demand. The "year-round" foliage plant-only business model that Grandpa had so successfully predicted had run its course. The retail florist segment of our industry was in a low growth/no growth predicament and the future was mediocre, because Promoflor (an attempt at a national marketing order) was dead. As we looked around our industry, the only "real" growth in a product segment was in "bedding plants." It didn't take a rocket scientist to figure out where we



needed to be in order to fill our greenhouses and sell our plants. Beginning about 1990, we re-entered the bedding plant market with a small selection of specialty crops in 4- and 6-inch pots, 10-inch hanging baskets, and combination pots. Throughout the decade, we increased our growing expertise and our offerings until today, where we can see on the horizon, spring sales eclipsing foliage plant sales.

As we proceed into the new century, our company will be positioned as a "spring" wholesale grower that also serves a limited number of customers during the summer and winter months. Less will be more, and more will be less. The changes we have made are beginning to show payoff in increased bottom line numbers during months when we traditionally only witnessed red ink. We now have fewer customers to service, we sell those customers more product per invoice, and our daily business life is a little more pleasurable and a little less hectic. The analysis of our customer base, the distribution system, and the product mix is a constant task. The computer network server and the personal computer make this task much easier than in the old days of paper and adding machines. We spend time almost every week looking at the numbers in various situations, sometimes devoting hours to the task and sometimes only minutes.

Small business owners must make time to work "on" their business and not "in" their business. Analysis of how, when, and where the sales are coming from is extremely

important to future planning and execution.

Our company has been and is still transforming itself from what it was to what it will be. In addition to the previous details, we also face the challenge of a location on relatively valuable real estate. We exist on a 37-acre site, with 1,200 feet of road frontage, on a four-lane U.S. highway averaging around 40,000 vehicles per day traffic flow. Do we develop a retail presence? Do we develop our land to the highest and best use (which doesn't include a wholesale greenhouse operation)? Do we sell our present location and relocate to another site with a new, highly efficient physical plant? I can't tell you what these answers are at this writing. What I can tell you is that we devote a little time on a constant basis, formulating our decisions.

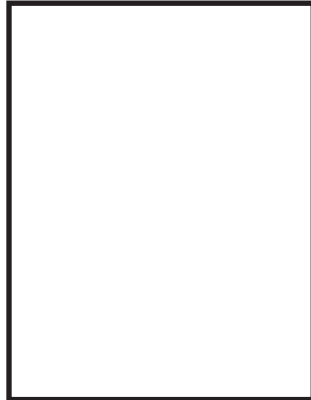
Working on our business and not only in it; constantly considering the future and not just focusing on the present; consulting with other business people and sharing stories and experience – these are the things that help make our company healthy, long-term. These are what make us capable to face the challenges and decisions that transform what we have done to what we will do.

Grandpa faced a business challenge, predicted the future, and prospered. Hopefully, the next generation will look back on our successes and failures, learn from our experience, and formulate the processes that will produce prosperity for a new future at an even older company.

OFA

REVIEW OF RESEARCH ON PRESS EXTRACTION

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Research

Scoggins, H.L., D.A. Bailey, and P.V. Nelson. 2001. Development of the Press Extraction Method for Plug Substrate Analysis: Quantitative Relationships Between Solution Extract Techniques. *HortScience* 36:918-921

Scoggins, H.L., D.A. Bailey, and P.V. Nelson. 2001. Efficacy of the Press Extraction Method for Bedding Plant Plug Nutrient Monitoring. *HortScience* 37:108-112.

Few things are more fundamental to producing a quality floral crop than maintaining healthy root growth and function. Numerous articles have been written warning of the hazards of the "out of sight, out of mind" school of root zone management. We've all heard horror stories of growers, even experienced growers, who have lost crops and income because they failed to monitor media pH, EC, and nutrient levels. With the advent of inexpensive portable pH and EC meters and the ease of use of the Pour-Thru (PT) extraction technique for potted plants and bedding plants, growers have little excuse for neglecting this vital aspect of crop culture.

Growing media testing has been the subject of a number of recent *OFA Bulletin* articles including:

- Cavins, T., B. Whipker, W. Fonteno, and J. Gibson. Establishing a Pour-Thru sampling program: Part I. April, 2000. pages 1, 7-11.
- Cavins, T., B. Whipker, W. Fonteno, and J. Gibson. Establishing a Pour-Thru sampling program: Part II. May, 2000. pages 11-14.
- Thomas, P. and S. Carver. Getting a firm grip on pH drift. March, 2002. pages 1, 5-9.

This long-winded introduction (or was it a tirade?) brings us to the two research reports by Holly Scoggins, Doug Bailey, and Paul Nelson. As important as monitoring is to bedding and potted crops, it can be even more critical to seedling plugs. Because plug cell volumes are small, there is little media present to help buffer swings in media chemistry. Soluble salt (EC), pH, and nutrient levels can quickly climb or drop into ranges that cause significant production problems. The small media volume of the plug cells also creates sampling and monitoring challenges, especially as seedling root systems proliferate in the cells. The PT technique is not well suited to plug cell sampling because the small media volume and depth adversely affects drainage and extract dilution.

Holly, Doug, and Paul, in these two reports, share some of their latest efforts with the Press Extraction (PE) technique. The beauty of this technique is that it preserves the simplicity

of PT and is quick, inexpensive, and easy to perform in the greenhouse. The grower irrigates the plug trays with a "standard" fertilizer solution. "One hour after liquid fertilizer is applied (i.e. is irrigated), while the substrate (growing media) is still at or near container capacity, the grower picks up a representative tray and presses several plugs, collecting the expelled solution for immediate analysis. ... In previous experiments, varying the force applied within a range likely to be manually applied by growers did not affect the pH, EC, or nutrient analysis of the extracted solution."

The problem with any new sampling technique, even if it's quick and easy, is that standards don't yet exist. What do the numbers mean that you generate using PE? That was the focus of these two reports. The authors compared pH and EC readings generated using PE to those from the more established extraction techniques including saturated media extract (SME) and 1 part media to 2 parts water (1:2), from a number of angles. They looked at the impact of potential influencing factors such as: media composition, sample size, amount of fertilizer in the irrigation solution, and bedding plant species.

As you might expect, differences in the amount of dilution of the media solution correlated to differences in readings generated by the three extraction techniques. pH measures from PE were 0.1 to 0.4 units below those generated by SME depending on the particular experimental influence evaluated. PE-generated EC readings were 0.1 to 0.6 units (dS/m) higher than those from SME.

WHAT WAS THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE OF THIS RESEARCH?

Actually there were several. The one we'll focus on is that though standards for pH, EC, and nutrient content are still being developed, there is at least reasonably good correlation between pH, EC, and most nutrient readings generated from SME and PE samples. This research suggests that as a grower, you can take advantage of the ease and economy of PE and feel some level of comfort interpreting them using established SME guidelines. Roger Styer and David Koranski set pH and EC guidelines for SME at 5.5 to 6.5 for pH and 0.75 and 1.99 dS/m for EC (Styer, R.C. and D.S. Koranski. 1997. Plug & transplant production: A grower's guide. Ball). If your PE-generated pH or EC readings approach these SME guidelines (especially the upper EC limit), you can send plug samples to a soil testing lab for a second opinion. This precaution will also give you personal experience with the two techniques and help you better interpret your PE tests.

We only have scratched the surface of the riches that can be mined from these two research reports. We haven't even looked at comparisons of nutrient content readings obtained from the various extraction techniques. Because of the importance of media/root zone management to all growers and the potential that PE brings to managing plug production, experienced growers are encouraged to read these reports in full.

OFA

PRICING FOR PROFIT

Continued from page 1

supermarket floral programs had matured into true profit centers. As profit centers, floral programs were required to pay their way. Supermarket margins began their gradual creep upward, while growers' delivered prices stayed the same or were less.

CONSOLIDATION OF SUPERMARKETS

Supermarkets are buying other supermarkets, and consolidation is occurring at a rapid rate. Their goal is to increase their size and market share and decrease their costs of doing business by spreading their overhead costs across a larger store base. They desire increased negotiating and buying power by commanding a larger market share of what's purchased and sold in the market.

SUPPLY & DEMAND

In the year 2000, the National Greenhouse Manufacturers Association reported an increase of more than 19 million square feet of new gutter-connected greenhouses constructed in the United States. With increases in production space like the year 2000, increases from other past years, and increased imports of potted flowering plants from Canada, some product categories have exceeded their demand. Oversupply has helped to drive prices at or below actual production costs in several instances.

THE FRAMEWORK'S IN PLACE

Once you fully understand the framework of the market you're selling into, it becomes easier to begin the task of making decisions about which crops to grow, how much to grow, and what prices can be charged.

UNDERSTAND YOUR OVERHEAD COSTS

There's little need to say that you need to know your

direct costs for the items that make up your product. Examples of direct costs are the costs associated with your container, soil, cuttings, and for each unit grown.

It's imperative that you understand the cost of your overhead and how to include its cost into the products you produce. Overhead costs are items that can't be directly associated with a product. It's a longer list than the list of items that are included to make up that product. They can include such items as the cost of electricity, property taxes, and even salaries. White's uses actual growing space (bench, basket, floor, and grow field) to calculate the cost per square foot of overhead.

Allocating your cost of overhead to a specific crop is as simple as finding your cost per square foot per week and then charging that cost against the space and time it takes to grow your crop. It's a time-consuming task that can show a truer picture of



how much money actually goes into producing a crop.

We have found that while it's more accurate to track labor and salaries as a direct cost, it's nearly as accurate to treat labor and salaries as overhead costs. We feel attempting to collect the data can take more time and cost more than the information is worth.

TRACK YOUR CROP LOSS

It's vital to track growing-related crop losses by crop by variety on a weekly basis. Crop loss needs to be calculated into the costs of growing a product. Poor performing varieties need to be eliminated from future crops. Crops that find their way to the compost pile pull down your gross and net profits.

A NEW MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

As White's Nursery has grown, so too have the number of categories of products

that we produce and sell. Throughout any week of the year, there may be more than 60 different product categories being produced for sale. As the number of categories have increased, so too has the time and complexity of analyzing direct costs, overhead costs, sales volumes, and pricing trends for each and every category.

NEW SYSTEMS

White's worked closely with two of its software vendors, Starcom of Bothell, Washington and IssueTrak of Virginia Beach, Virginia. At our request, Starcom created two additional reports for their sales module. One report details production units that are ready for sale compared to units sold on a by-week basis over two different time periods (Figure 1). The report is used to quickly spot overages, shortages, and overall trends in comparison to past years. Its primary use

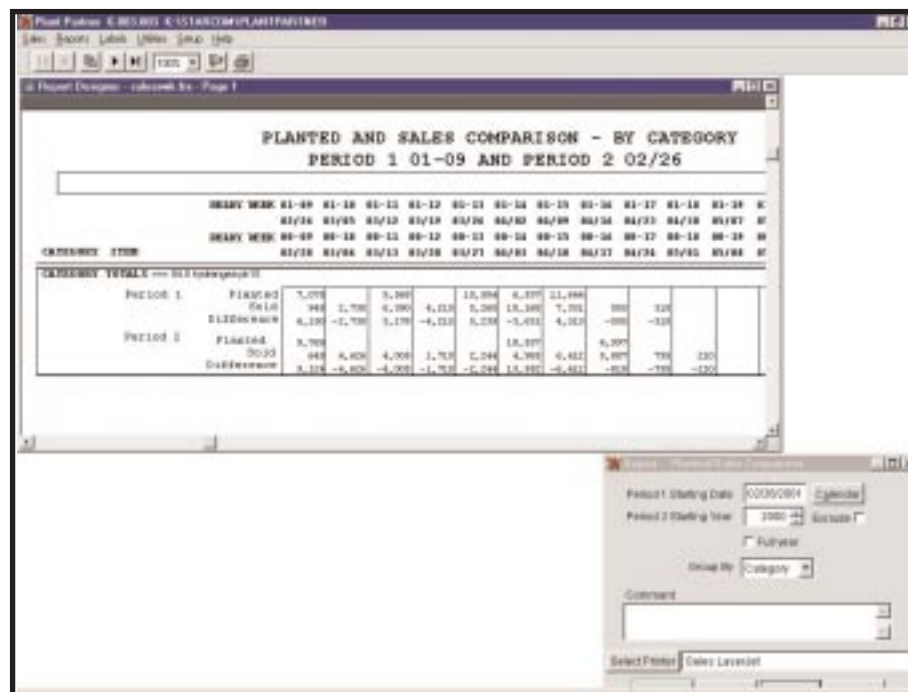


Figure 1. This report tracks units available for sale and units sold.

Item Code	Price	Quantity	Weighted Price	Total
0.0000	0.00			
0.0000	0.20	11	2.20	2.20
0.0000	1.00	1,000	1,000.00	1,002.20
0.0000	0.50	100	50.00	1,052.20
0.0000	0.10	100	10.00	1,062.20
0.0000	0.05	100	5.00	1,067.20
0.0000	0.02	100	2.00	1,069.20
0.0000	0.01	100	1.00	1,070.20
0.0000	0.00	100	0.00	1,070.20

Figure 2. An example of a weighted average price report.

OLD SYSTEMS

White's contracted out to a Virginia-based company, IssueTrak, to develop a new costing program similar in function to an 18-year-old MS-DOS-based costing program developed by a defunct company called Buckeye Computing of Ohio. In early 1999, we contacted the original developer of the program and found he had no interest in updating the old MS-DOS-based program.

Fortunately, we found IssueTrak of Virginia Beach, Virginia to develop a costing system called GrowersCost to track direct costs, and most importantly, track and apply overhead costs to a crop based upon the space and time it takes to grow (Figures 3 and 4).

THE FUTURE

The key for White's future success is to manage all of our product categories to achieve desired gross and net profits. The combination of our old and new systems and sheer determination to crunch the numbers will guide us in making pricing and production decisions.

Some crops will receive a premium price. We'll produce fewer quantities of other crops, but sell for above market prices. Still other crops will be grown and sold at a reduced margin because of current market pressures. Some product categories will be eliminated.

White's hoped there was a magic pricing formula where direct costs, apportioned overhead costs, and a standard net profit margin would create one price for a specific category of items. Unfortunately, based on all the changes that have occurred over the past 20 years in our industry, current market conditions do affect prices and what prices buyers are willing to pay. **OFA**

Forecast Group ID	Forecast Group Description	Price Code	Qty	Start Date	Over Costs	Savings	Price	Locked
14.5 1458 1424	4.5 1458 1424		1000	12/1/00				
14.5 1458 1424	4.5 1458 1424		1000	1/1/01				
14.5 1458 1424	4.5 1458 1424		1000	2/1/01				

Figures 3 (above) and 4. (left). Assigning variable (production) costs and fixed (overhead) costs per unit area and time is critical for surviving, changing, and growing.

Month	Year	Locked	ESTIMATED Overhead	ESTIMATED Cost/SF	ACTUAL Overhead	ACTUAL Cost/SF	
01	2000		0.00	0	446,722.34	507,005	0.71 6927
02	2000		0.00	0	400,281.76	507,005	0.73 7845
03	2000		0.00	0	817,771.76	507,005	0.72 4471
04	2000		0.00	0	733,093.96	507,005	0.76 8807
05	2000		0.00	0	820,269.57	507,005	0.72 6473
06	2000		0.00	0	722,620.38	507,005	0.78 6728
07	2000		0.00	0	636,892.77	507,005	0.72 8918
08	2000		0.00	0	641,690.77	507,005	0.75 6817
09	2000		0.00	0	712,252.37	507,005	0.76 6475
10	2000		0.00	0	636,376.25	507,005	0.72 8625
11	2000		0.00	0	541,825.37	507,005	0.71 6967
12	2000		0.00	0	716,742.54	507,005	0.78 4309
Total:			0.00	0	6,165,721.22	507,005	0.77

in costing is to spot and eliminate future overages by not producing products that show indications of not having a strong sell through.

Starcom also created a weighted average price report. It's a critical report to show all the price points of items that were sold during a

weekly or seasonal period. The report shows the weighted percentage of the total items sold as well as an average price (see Figure 2 example). For White's, future production will increase on items that show higher price points. Future production will decrease on items that sold for price points that did not meet gross profit or net profit requirements.

ARE YOU READY FOR A WPS INSPECTION?

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In March 2000, the General Accounting Office (GAO) issued a report on the implementation of the Worker Protection Standard in the United States that was critical of EPA. In essence, the report indicated that EPA and its state partners (usually state departments of agriculture) were not doing an adequate job of enforcement and needed to improve compliance and enforcement for greater worker protection. As a result, EPA is increasing pressure on the Ohio Department of Agriculture and other states to increase enforcement activities.

The objective set for states is to ensure that each state inspector conducts comprehensive inspections, uses good interview techniques, collects sufficient evidence to document violations, and writes a report that indicates the compliance status of the inspected agricultural establishment.

What does this mean for Ohio growers? Likely the total number of inspections will not increase, because the number of inspectors (currently nine) to cover all of Ohio has not increased. However, the depth and detail of those inspections will be greater. Also, WPS inspections will be more likely to occur in minor crop industries that have the majority of workers such as greenhouse, nursery, fruit and vegetable operations. Most field crop production does not involve workers and hand-labor tasks and is not the major target for WPS enforcement.

DOES THE WORKER PROTECTION STANDARD APPLY TO YOUR OPERATION?

If you are a small operation that employs only immediate family, most of the WPS requirements do not apply. However, whenever you have workers at your operation working in areas that have had pesticides with WPS labeling applied within the last 30 days, then WPS does apply.

WHO IS CONSIDERED A WORKER?

Growers often ask whether these requirements apply to customers or to friends who may help a grower. If you have friends who volunteer for a day to help you and they do not receive any form of payment, WPS does not apply. Most WPS provisions do not apply to customers either or to immediate family. The WPS is an occupational health standard for employees. A worker is someone who gets paid to perform tasks related to the cultivation and harvesting of plants. However, you are not allowed to let an application of pesticides contact anyone, and restricted-entry intervals apply to everyone. And, if a friend or family member were helping you, you certainly would want to provide proper protective gear, information, and decontamination sites when necessary.

WHAT WILL AN INSPECTOR LOOK FOR?

Included in this article is the checklist of key items that an inspector will be reviewing at your business (Figure 1). The inspector may also crosscheck labels with your application records, central information, and the personal protective equipment you have provided to make sure you are following the directions on the label and providing correct information about applications to your workers and handlers. He or she will also

conduct interviews with your employees to determine if they are receiving training, getting proper notification (oral or signs), observing restricted entry intervals (REIs), and being supplied with personal protective equipment (PPE).

WHAT ARE THE KEY PROBLEMS THAT INSPECTORS HAVE FOUND?

Based on 2001 Ohio data, growers have been strong in providing decontamination sites, observing REIs, and notification. However, actual compliance with REIs and notification has not been easy to determine. Growers have been generally good at providing PPE, but some improvement is needed. Two areas of weakness have been training and central information. Compliance in these areas was initially higher, but has been slipping in recent years. Some grumbling by employers indicates they feel employees do not read the central information. Regardless, a key component of this regulation is that workers have a right to be informed of the pesticides that they may come in contact with. And, accordingly, inspectors will be checking to see that up-to-date central information is in place and safety training is occurring. Be aware that under the regulation workers must be retrained every five years. Documentation of this training should be kept in each employee's personnel file.

Overall, approximately 20 percent of the grower operations inspected had little or no compliance. Nurseries averaged 83 percent compliance, and greenhouses averaged 76 percent compliance.

KEY THINGS TO DO:

1. Make training and communication to your workers a priority. Workers must receive at least "basic" safety information before they enter a treated area. The complete worker training must be done before the sixth day they work in an area that has been treated and under an REI in the last 30 days. A grower can accept evidence of training by someone else, but many feel you are better off to train your own workers rather than rely on the validity of training elsewhere. Ohio does not have an approved training card for this reason. Handlers must be trained before they do any "handling" activity. Individuals who are licensed applicators are considered trained.

2. Post application information, emergency information, and the safety poster in a central location that is ACCESSIBLE to employees. Information in your office on the computer is not considered accessible to employees.

3. Provide proper personal protective equipment that is in good condition and clean. Provide convenient soap, water and towels (decontamination sites).

4. Notify your workers where applications are being made or where REIs are in effect, and post appropriate signs when required. Monitor fumigation applications and ventilate greenhouses properly.

Remember ... the key intent of this regulation is to protect your business's most valuable asset – your employees – from any possible long-term health effects from pesticides in the workplace. Overall, you can achieve this by informing workers of applications, taking steps to reduce exposure, and being prepared to provide emergency assistance if ever necessary.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

An overview of the WPS for the floriculture industry is provided in the OFA publication *Tips on Managing Floriculture Crop Problems*. Some of the recent changes and exceptions to the WPS are noted there, and specific requirements for greenhouses are also highlighted. In general, most of the information in the

original WPS *How-to-Comply Manual* still applies and it is the most comprehensive source of all the requirements.

In addition to the *How-to-Comply Manual*, you should also have a WPS poster for display, handler training manuals, and

worker training manuals. All are available through Gempler's safety catalog, as are approved training videotapes for conducting worker or handler training. All materials are available in English and Spanish.

Figure 1. Checklist of WPS items that an inspector will review at your operation.

WPS Provisions	Inspection Findings	Yes	No
A. Central Information	Required information properly displayed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety poster and emergency info? • Application info and posted before application? • Workers/handlers aware of location and accessible? Information displayed for required time? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central info up for 30 days after last REI if workers/handlers present? 		
B. Safety Training	Required Training Provided <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handler/worker training provided meets requirements? • Retraining every 5 years • Handlers/early entry workers trained before doing tasks? • Workers trained before 6 exposure days? Qualified trainer(s) used? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified applicator? • Trainer of certified applicators • Attended approved train-the-trainer course • Trained WPS handlers for worker training 		
C. Decontamination	Required decontamination and items provided? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for all handler/early entry tasks, when workers in area within 30 days of REI (7 days if REI 4 hours or less) • Clean water, soap, single-use towels (if eyewear required, immediate access to 1 pt. eye flush). • Change of clothing for handlers. Requirements for decontamination location met? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 1/4 mile, at mix sites, at PPE removal sites, access to eye flush 		
D. Entry Restrictions	Restrictions during application met? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No persons allowed in treated area if not handler • Buffer zones for nurseries/greenhouses met REI requirements met? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workers not in REI area except when allowed by WPS Exceptions to REI's appropriate? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No contact, allowed short-term tasks, ag emergency, approved exceptions (limited contact, irrigation) • Requirements for early entry met (provide and maintain PPE, read label safety info, prevent heat illness, have decontamination) 		
E. Notice of Application	Workers given required notifications? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral warning, posted treated areas, double notification if required • Signs not posted before 24 hours of application, removed within 3 days of application and before worker entry Required posting used? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have in English and Spanish (or other language) "Danger Pesticides – Keep Out" with WPS symbol in center • Size: standard 14"x 16", smaller size allowed in greenhouse < 25' apart Oral warnings contain required information? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/description, time entry restricted, instruct not to enter 		
F. Personal Protective Equipment	Required PPE provided? Duties of PPE met? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspected, cleaned, replaced, clean storage separate from other clothing, etc. Measures taken to avoid heat illness? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work at cooler times, rest periods, water 		
G. Info Exchange	Required Exchange between employers met?		
H. Monitoring Duties	Visual/voice contact every 2 hours with handler using a product with skull and crossbones? Greenhouse fumigator has continual monitoring? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual/voice contact with another handler with PPE 		
I. Inform Handlers	Handlers have immediate label access and safety information? Handlers instructed in proper equipment use?		
J. Equipment Duties	Handlers inspect equipment before use?		
K. Inform others	PPE cleaners informed that PPE may be contaminated and risks? Contracted equipment workers/mechanics informed of pesticide risks?		
L. Crop Advisor Exemption	Meet crop advisor exemption requirements?		

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE

Continued from page 1

were willing to ask questions that would help lead to practices that would improve the standards of plant care.

Over the years, I have learned from professors such as Dick Lindquist, John Peterson, and Chuck Powell. I have used them as resources and appeared on panels with them. They have taught me a number of things, the most important probably being that there is no one way to solve a problem; and if you find something that works, ignore the expert's advice and keep on doing it your way.

It has taken me years to realize that watering plants in an interior is one of the most difficult things to do right. There are many reasons for this. Most of the studies done on watering are done from the grower's point of view. This is probably because the interior plantscape industry has been notably stingy in supporting research. The problem is that these studies do not help us in the field, because growers have many advantages over plantscape technicians. Growers have the ability to adjust the growing medium and the environment, and usually have irrigation systems that will deliver the right combination of water and nutrients at just the right times. What do we have? Different media in each pot since they come from different growers, HVAC systems that shut down on weekends so that the temperatures go as high as 110°F in an office over a weekend (I have measured such an extreme over a 4th of July weekend in St. Louis), and a plant that has diminished nutrient needs while the media has high soluble salts. In addition, we have a limited time in which to make watering decisions and implement them. All these factors make it easier to tell you what not to do rather than give you ironclad rules about how to treat the plants you must care for.

In my opinion, one sure thing is that so-called moisture meters are useless. I have watched as John Peterson placed a moisture probe into de-ionized water and the reading showed bone dry. Plastic and metal soil probes are better in that they allow you to actually look at a section of the media from the top of the soil to the bottom of the pot. The process of coring also helps to stimulate root growth and aerates the soil. This still leaves us with decisions about when moist is wet enough. The increased use of sub-irrigating systems, both commercially produced and homemade solutions, is a boon to the industry. The biggest problem with them seems to be that people need to remember that after the system is empty, there is still plenty of water in the root ball. You must allow for the natural drying down of the medium before watering, or else the plant will never get a chance to let oxygen into the root zone. Trusting that the system works is essential.

The best way I have found to water plants, particularly those in high-peat media, is simply not practical today. In the early 1970s, I could get an azalea to last more than five weeks at an account by submerging each one in a bucket until the bubbles stopped coming up. This assured that the entire root ball was wet and the plant would have adequate moisture. The problem is that I have also discovered it is less expensive to replace the plant than it is to pay for the time to care for it in this manner.

That being said, what does constitute proper watering methods for interior plants?

My answer is that there are two factors that must be considered, volume and frequency. Let either one of these get out of whack, and there is trouble down the line.



Of these two, it is hard to say which will cause you more trouble; but the more years I put in, the more frequency has shown itself to be the biggest problem. Many technicians allow fear to be the driving force behind watering decisions. They do not want to be perceived as doing nothing, so they water "just a little." When this is done, the result is that the plant never gets the water it needs where it needs it, at the feeder roots.

The answer is to give the plant enough water to thoroughly moisten the entire root ball (the submersion solution if not the practice) and then to let the root ball slowly dry out before applying water again. Depending on the plant, the size, and the environmental conditions, this may be anywhere from two weeks to over a month for the average plant we care for. The typical *Aglaonema* or *Dracaena* species, in an office setting, will survive better on benign neglect than it will to being watered, fed, and fussed over every week. We all need to trust the fact that these plants are hardy and have a built-in desire to keep on living. This is why, when we went from weekly care to bi-weekly, we found an initial decrease in replacement rates. The plants simply did not need to be watered every week.

The second part of the formula is volume. How much water do you apply every time you water? Water is a funny creature. I once heard a scientist say that if we did not have water, we would have had to invent it to make the world work as we know it. Combine water with a medium that does not particularly care for it, like peat-lite mixes, and you have immediate problems. Allow the medium to dry out too much, and the water will simply run down the sides of the pot and never get where it needs to, the root zone.

Soil that is slightly moist will hold more water than soil that is bone dry. (If you do not believe this, try a little experiment. Take two synthetic sponges, one slightly moist and one thoroughly dry. Measure out equal portions of water. Dip both sponges in the water for three seconds. Take them out and wring the sponges out. Which one absorbed the most water?)

A short, wide container actually will hold more water than a tall, narrow one. That is why some growers plant smaller *Spathiphyllums* in bulb pans or azalea pots. The only water that really counts is water that can freely be taken up by the plant. That means water at the level of the feeder roots that the plant can easily use when it needs it. Water is trapped in the pore spaces as you pour it into the pot. Put on enough water and you will evenly wet the medium with the excess running out the drain holes. However, the medium will trap water in the spaces at the top if not enough water is given to force it down into the lower sections of the pot. Water too little, and the water will never reach the place where it needs to be. When we water adequately, the root ball will hold enough water to keep the plant from being stressed.

Just how much water is needed to do this? Try an experiment to find that out. Take a plant of each size that you use and set it in a saucer to catch any run-off. Make sure the plant is at the point of really needing water. Using a large measuring cup, slowly pour water over the entire surface of the pot. If you are doing this right, it may take several cups of

water before there is any running out of the drain holes. Once there is water in the saucer, stop and wait a few minutes to see if the plant will re-absorb this water. Now, record the amount of water it took to fully hydrate this size pot. This will establish a baseline for the amount of water that should be applied *each* time you water in order to moisten the entire root ball. Do this for each pot size that you use, and you can develop rules for the amount of water to be applied every time the plant needs water. By following this procedure, you will never be tempted to give a plant "just a little" because you will know that it does no good for the plant.

Several years ago, Dr. Joseph Cialone showed me some charts on water usage he had made. These charts reinforced my thinking regarding watering practices. They showed that plants got into a rhythm of water needs. The plants became used to a certain period between watering and adjusted to that schedule. During this period, there were times when the root ball was too wet and times when it was probably too dry; but it was just mirroring what the plant adjusted to in nature. As long as neither extreme endured for too long, the plant seemed to thrive.

The plant itself will give good indications of when it needs to be watered. Look at the leaves. Do they look healthy? Feel the texture. Is it firm? Plants that need water will often lose their glossy look and appear dull. They will have an unusual

angle and droop when they should be erect. Temperature will affect this, as anyone who has seen plants in a greenhouse on a hot sunny day will attest. Use your knowledge of plants to help assess whether it is time to water or not. The important thing to remember is that if the plant appears not to need water at that time, it is probably better to wait. Never give it "just a little." Always soak the root ball.

Are there plants that need more water than others? Of course there are. Even within varieties of the same type of plant, there can be tremendous differences. *Spathiphyllum* 'Sensation' will use 1 1/2 times as much water as *Spathiphyllum* 'Supreme' over the same period of time. Our skill lies in knowing this and choosing the correct plant for the space and environment.

Our job is to make plants last as long as possible in a generally hostile environment. Humidity is low, people throw things in the pots, and the light levels would send an OSHA representative running to file a complaint if we tried to make a person work at that level. Proper watering technique is the most effective way we can influence plant longevity. It is within our control. All we have to do is follow the two rules: Water enough to thoroughly soak the root ball so water is where the plant needs it, and get it on a schedule that allows it to dry moderately before applying a measured amount of water. **OFA**

The Art, The Science, The Future . . .

2002 SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

More than 180 educational sessions will be held during the week. Sessions are held from approximately 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday through Tuesday, and from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Wednesday.

MANAGEMENT/MARKETING – sessions on hiring and motivating entry-level employees, dealing with labor laws, marketing, advertising, customer service, family business matters, collecting on sales, CEO/Owner leadership forum.

GROWER – tour to central Ohio greenhouses; sessions on crop culture, hiring additional labor, the Ornamental Germplasm Center, marketing, disease, insect & greenhouse management, greenhouse technology, plugs & bedding plants, potted plants, perennials, new and unusual plants, America in Bloom, Michigan State University's College of Knowledge Level I, GPN- and Syngenta-sponsored crop disease and insect management symposia.

GARDEN CENTER – tour to Dayton, Ohio area; sessions on managing and marketing your business, new trends, selling year-round, updating your facilities.

RETAIL – sessions on designing with tropical flowers, weddings, German designs, making and marketing hand-tied bouquets, designs with candles; Design contest (theme: America the Beautiful).

INTERIOR PLANTSCAPE – interactive workshop at several Columbus sites; sessions on plant identification, IPM, plant maintenance, history and future of the interiorscape industry, holiday decorating, sales & marketing.

INDUSTRY NEWCOMER OUTREACH – Job Fair; sessions on how to start your own business, how to get the most out of Short Course, coping with change and adversity, a roundtable discussion of issues affecting floriculture.



JULY 13-17, 2002
Columbus, Ohio USA

2002 TRADE SHOW JULY 14-16

Sunday & Monday

9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Tuesday

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

- Visit 1,265 booths
- more than 525 exhibitors
- New Varieties and New Products displays – the latest technologies and newest cultivars to hit the market will be showcased.

For more information,
contact OFA.

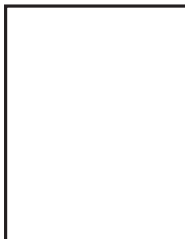
614-487-1117 • Fax: 614-487-1216
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NOMINEES FOR 2002-03 OFA OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

All active members are encouraged to vote for officers and Board of Directors members. The Ohio Florists' Association is **your** organization. Exercise your right to vote. Elect those persons you want to represent you. All active members will be mailed the ballot in early May. The ballots must be returned to the Ohio Florists' Association by June 19, 2002.

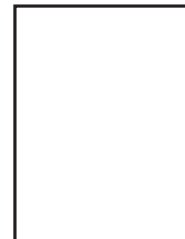
PRESIDENT

Joseph Boarini, Indianapolis, Indiana, is president of Grande Greenhouse Inc. Joe oversees the 80,000-square-foot greenhouse, which serves central Indiana. He describes his work roles as "president, coach, and therapist." Joe is a graduate of the University of Wyoming and is a member of AAF. He is also a past member of the SAF Grower Council and AFMC Committee. Joe has participated on the OFA Research, Ohio Floriculture Foundation, Finance, and Grower Short Course planning committees. Joe is a past OFA board member and Executive Committee liaison. He is currently serving as president of OFA.



VICE PRESIDENT

Kathleen Benken, Silverton, Ohio, is vice president of H.J. Benken Inc. Benken's is a 60,000-square-foot greenhouse, retail florist, and garden center. Kathy's responsibilities include advertising, signage, all printed materials, newsletter editor, and problem solver. She has attended The Art Academy of Cincinnati, participated in numerous Short Course presentations for more than 20 years, and worked for the Cincinnati Horticultural Society. Kathy has been involved with OFA's Garden Center, Publications, and Retail Planning committees, the Board of Directors, and the OFA Steering Committee, as well as America in Bloom. She is currently serving as the OFA vice president.



OHIO GROWER (one elected)

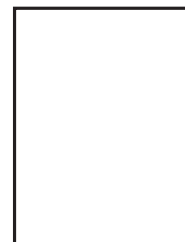
Scott Kollman, Twinsburg, Ohio, is owner/operator of Kollman's Greenhouses Inc. Kollman's is a 1-acre production greenhouse wholesale and retail operation. Scott's responsibilities include purchasing, scheduling, and serving as grower. He is a graduate of The Ohio State University and has been in business with his wife, Susan, for more than 30 years. Scott is a past president and board member of the Greater Cleveland Growers Association. He currently serves on OFA's Grower Extension and Nominations committees.



Terry Diefenbacher, Cincinnati, Ohio, is president of Diefenbacher Greenhouses Inc. Terry is the head of operations and customer relations for the 4-acre wholesale greenhouse started in 1983. Terry is a graduate of The Ohio State University and also studied education and teacher supervision at the graduate level at Ohio University. He taught vocational horticulture for six years before starting the greenhouse. Terry assisted with decorations, plant material, and the OFA information booth for several years while the Short Course was held in Cincinnati.



Dick Bostdorff, Bowling Green, Ohio, is president of Bostdorff Greenhouse Acres Ltd., a retail and wholesale greenhouse and landscape business. Bostdorff's grows and markets bedding plants, as well as vegetable transplants. Dick is responsible for the overall management and day-to-day nurturing of the operation. Dick is a graduate of The Ohio State University and the University of Missouri-Columbia. He previously worked as an Extension Specialist in New York and Oregon, and as a horticulturist/vice president for Speedling Inc. Dick is chair of the OFA Grower Extension committee. He is also past president of the Toledo Area Flower and Vegetable Growers Association, chair of the Ag Incubator Committee, past member of the BPFII Research Review team, and a production horticulture class teacher at Bowling Green State University. Dick has received many awards for his work and volunteer activities in the industry.



OHIO GARDEN CENTER (one elected)

Ron Wilson, Mason, Ohio, is marketing director for the Wm. A. Natorp Co. Natorp's is a multi-faceted operation, with a 500-acre nursery raising woody, perennial, and annual/seasonal crops, retail garden stores, and a landscape and maintenance division. Ron is responsible for marketing and public relations for the company. He previously worked as general manager of Natorp's garden stores for 11 years. He has also worked as a landscape designer and landscape sales manager. Ron is a graduate of The Ohio State University, and he has been involved in the green industry for more than 32 years. As an OFA member, Ron has attended numerous OFA functions and Short Courses. He is also a committee member and past president of the Ohio Nursery and Landscape Association.



Mike Berns, Middletown, Ohio, is general manager of Berns Garden Center. Berns is a second-generation family business with four divisions: garden center, production greenhouse, landscape, and a production nursery. The business now has a new facility built on 10 acres, designed to merchandize and sell plants and garden products. Mike is a graduate of The Ohio State University. He previously worked as a grower for PanAmerican Plant Company and Berns Greenhouse. Mike is a past member and chair of the OFA Garden Center Committee. He is also a past president of the Cincinnati Flower Growers' Association.

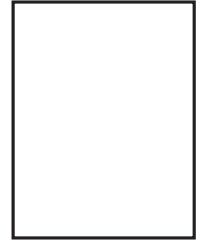


Mary Stowe, Columbus, Ohio, is the nursery manager for the retail division of Oakland Nursery Inc. Oakland is a retail nursery and garden store that also has a re-wholesale division, residential and commercial design and landscaping, an interiorscape division, and an irrigation design, installation, and maintenance division. Mary's duties include managing the daily retail business, employee training, plant buying, coordinating special events, and sales. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University. Mary previously worked as an assistant in plant production for a retail florist, as a plant problem diagnostician assistant with Chemlawn Corp., and for the OSU clinic. Mary has served on the OFA Membership Committee and former S.E.E. Ohio Committee.



GROWER AT-LARGE (one elected)

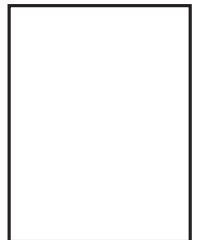
Lloyd Traven, Kintnersville, Pennsylvania, is owner and partner of Peace Tree Farm. Peace Tree Farm is a wholesale grower and propagator of potted herbs, herb liners, fine flowering pots, topiary, and baskets. Their clientele includes Longwood Gardens, Washington National Cathedral, Smith and Hawken, and the Smithsonian Institution. Peace Tree is an exclusive gold level supplier of propagated herb liners to Ball Seed. Lloyd is a graduate of Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture and completed graduate coursework at Cornell University. Prior to Peace Tree Farm, Lloyd was assistant to the president – special projects for Ball Seed Company. He serves on OFA's Grower Short Course planning committee, as well as the FIRST Board of Directors, Research Committee, and Scholarship Committee. He is also a past member of the OFA Research committee and the Ohio Floriculture Foundation's Board of Directors. Lloyd has been a speaker at international events and has authored books and articles for many industry publications.



Henry Huntington, Loudon, New Hampshire, is president of Pleasant View Gardens Inc. Pleasant View is a wholesale grower of young plants and finished product, with 360,000 square feet under cover. Henry is responsible for the administrative side of this family business, including sales and marketing, planning, finance, business development, and managing outside partnerships. He earned an associate degree from the University of New Hampshire, and has worked for Pleasant View since he was in college. He became president in 1999. Some of his key accomplishments are the development and growth of Pleasant View's young plant division and developing a partnership with Proven Winners. Henry is a past president of BPI, past director of the New Hampshire Plant Growers Association, and director of the New England Greenhouse Conference. He currently serves on the OFA America in Bloom Contest Committee and is a past member of the Trade Show Committee.



William Robert (Bobby) Barnitz, Mason, West Virginia, is part-owner and vice president of Bob's Market and Greenhouses Inc. Bob's Market and Greenhouses is a family-operated wholesale/retail bedding plant operation and a regional plug supplier for Ball Seed Company. Bobby serves as the general manager in charge of production, sales, and purchasing. He is a graduate of Gallipolis Business College and has worked in the greenhouse business for 23 years. Bobby's company is a Gold Supplier for Ball Seed and has been awarded Ball Seed's Plug Topper Award. Bobby was also named as a 2001 GrowerTalks "Up and Comer."



Continued on page 14

NOMINEES FOR 2002-03 OFA OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Continued from page 13

ALLIED AT-LARGE (one elected)

Jim Eason, Crestview Hills, Kentucky, is president of Eason Horticultural Resources Inc. Eason Horticultural Resources is a sales company supplying growers and retailers throughout the United States with the world's best sources for young plants, perennials, seeds, bulbs, and nursery stock. As president, Jim orchestrates the primary functions of the company, including sales, customer service, and finance. Before creating Eason Horticultural Resources in late 1994, Jim worked for 19 years in sales with the Vaughan Seed Co. He is a graduate of Indiana University. Jim currently serves on the OFA Nominations and Membership committees.



Alan Zylstra, Petaluma, California, is vice president of sales for TrueLeaf Technologies, which manufactures and sells horticulture heating, irrigation, and control systems. Alan serves as the director of sales, and he works daily with growers on a national and international level to develop and implement environmental control systems for greenhouses and nurseries. He has worked 13 years in horticulture industry management and also has 13 years of education and experience in the financial industry, working with growers and farmers on financial management and planning. Alan is currently on the OFA Trade Show and Membership committees. He is a regular participant and contributor to OFA functions.



Marvin Miller, West Chicago, Illinois, is market research manager for Ball Horticultural Company. Ball Horticulture is a breeder, producer, and distributor of seeds, vegetative cuttings/plants/liners, and other production inputs. Marvin's research efforts focus on the changing structure, conduct, and performance of the horticulture industry, with current emphasis on North American floriculture. Marvin earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from Purdue University, and his doctorate from the University of Florida. He has been with Ball since 1983. Marvin travels extensively, visiting greenhouses and retail establishments. He also frequently writes and speaks about trends affecting the industry. Marvin is on the OFA Nominations Committee, and he was previously involved with the OFA Short Course Grower Planning Committee as well as the Management, Marketing and Keynote Planning Committee.

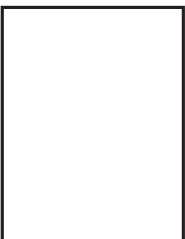


Kurt Becker, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, is commercial products manager at Dramm Corporation. He is responsible for marketing and participating in the development of future Dramm products. Kurt works with growers on pest management issues, irrigation system design, environmental control strategies, and watering techniques. He is a graduate of Denison University. Kurt and Dramm founded and produce the annual Dramm/OFA 5K Relay for Floriculture held during the OFA Short Course. During the first two years, the Relay raised more than \$18,000 for floriculture research. Kurt is a current OFA board member, completing a previous member's term. Prior to his OFA board service, Kurt was on the board of Bedding Plants International, as well as other non-floriculture organizations.



INTERIOR PLANTSCAPE AT-LARGE (one elected)

Barb Bennett, Orient, Ohio, is owner and president of The Plant People Inc. The Plant People is a small firm providing customized horticultural services (interior and exterior plant maintenance) to central Ohio commercial and residential clients. Barb's duties include administrative, sales, design, purchasing, accounting, and scheduling. She is a graduate of The Ohio State University. Barb worked as a horticulturist for Nationwide Insurance corporate offices and Muirfield Village Golf Club, and as a crew leader for Buck & Sons Landscape before starting The Plant People Inc. She is currently serving on the OFA Membership and Industry Newcomer Outreach committees, and is a past member and co-chair of the Interior Plantscape Committee.



Garry Clarke, Columbus, Ohio, is horticulture director of Franklin Park Conservatory. He was just promoted from his former position as Franklin Park's curator and interior horticulture director. Franklin Park is comprised of a 30,000-square-foot conservatory, interiorscape areas, 88-acre outdoor gardens, and a greenhouse growing facility. Garry supervises 15 staff in the horticulture department, oversees all interior and exterior plant maintenance and collections development, and coordinates horticulture groups, associations, and specialty plant societies at the Conservatory. Garry earned a three-year national diploma in horticulture at Pershore College of Horticulture in England. Following several internships in England and the United States, he was a supervisor at Ameriflora '92, the United States' first international horticultural exposition. Garry has served two terms on the OFA Interior Plantscape Committee, and has been a host and presenter for numerous Short Course and pest control seminars.



How to Get the Most Out of Best Sellers

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Each product category in your store has a best seller. This product will not necessarily be the cheapest or lowest gross profit item, but it will be the favorite product purchased by your customers in that category. You can use this to your advantage if you introduce some simple management strategies.

1. IDENTIFY THE BEST SELLERS IN EACH CATEGORY

To take advantage of the best seller concept, you'll need to know the best seller in each category. For some categories (i.e. beer), the best selling product will probably stay the same throughout the year. For other products, such as fruit in a supermarket, the best seller will change with the seasons, so you will need to analyze your sales results on a monthly basis.

2. POSITION BEST SELLERS STRATEGICALLY IN THE CATEGORY LAYOUT

Do not use the prime location in the category lay-

out for best sellers because they will sell anyway. Put your best sellers in what would normally be a lower selling position in the layout. They will help you increase sales in the overall category.

Customers need to see your best sellers, and shelf talkers will help you achieve this. Use your prime selling positions for impulse sales.

3. HAVE THE TEAM PROMOTE THE BEST SELLERS

Hilary Kahn, an Australia-based retail consultant, suggests you can increase your bottom line by getting your team to recommend the best sellers.

Best Seller Checklists

If yours is a large store with many categories, prepare a list of best sellers each month and make it available to all team members. This gives them the extra confidence and the opportunity to sell in categories apart from their own.

Train the team to sell best sellers

When customers are unsure about what product to select within a category, get your team to promote best sellers as one of their selling options. A great selling opener is always, "Our best seller is ..." It will give



the customer confidence in the salesperson, as it shows they have knowledge of their products.

The result of this is they start to trust your team member and will then readily accept that person's advice.

Train your team to sell up

In many situations, customers will purchase the best seller simply on a team member's advice – or allow your team member to sell up to a more profitable line.

4. EDUCATE YOUR CUSTOMERS

Consumers like buying best sellers. If they do not know the product category very well, they are happy to purchase best sellers, since, when they are unsure, they seek comfort in conforming.

Use shelf talkers or general point of purchase signage to highlight best sellers.

This signage could say:

"Our best selling 'x' this month is ..."

"Our best seller"

"The top selling 'x' in our store"

"Our customers' favorite 'x'"

The important thing is that you are honest with your customer.

5. MATCH PROMOTIONS WITH FACT

When introducing a best-selling strategy, make sure your advertising, internal promotions, and sales team are giving the same message to the customer.

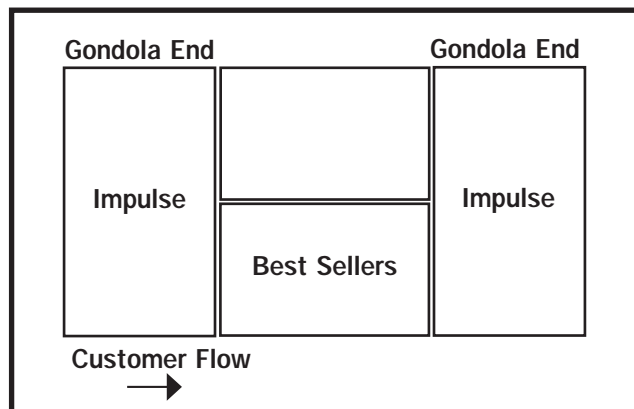
MANAGEMENT MEMO

Best selling strategies work brilliantly in some retail sectors and are underused in others.

The book and record industries have used this technique for many years with merchandising strategies that show the Top 10.

I recently worked with a retail client where we introduced the best selling strategy for the first time. Prior to my visit they were unaware of which products were their best sellers. Once we introduced the strategy and used shelf talkers, their sales of best sellers quadrupled.

What was even more interesting was that the overall sales within the category also increased. I believe this was due to the consumer gaining more confidence and trust in the retailer. **OFA**



FIRST – Do You Know What It Is?

Lela Kelly
FIRST President
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Members of the Floriculture Industry Research & Scholarship Trust (FIRST) board of directors have been polling our industry to see how many people actually know what FIRST is. The result led us to forge an all-out campaign to let our industry know exactly what we do.

There is a rule of market ing at Harvard that states you should be able to tell someone exactly what you do in the time it takes to take an elevator ride. So here goes:

FIRST is a combination of two established charitable foundations, Bedding Plants Foundation International (BPMI) and the Ohio Floriculture Foundation (OFF). We fund scholarships and research for the floriculture industry. Both of these organizations have been in existence for more than 20 years. Last year, BPMI was approached by OFF to merge. This made a lot of sense. To run a foundation requires overhead and erodes the amount of funds available for the industry.

FIRST is now a more national organization able to reach out to industry supporters and state and regional associations all over the country. Other associations face the same issues that OFF once faced. If these groups have funds to manage for research and scholarships, it will take additional money to run these programs. Why not let FIRST manage the funds, allowing individual associations to still direct how and where the funds will go?

There is a huge need for scholarship funding in our industry. Every year, FIRST receives more than 800 scholarship applications from students who are interested in pursuing a career in horticulture. Some of these students are interested in doing internships and could potentially be your future employees. With the cut-backs so many schools are experiencing, there is a huge need for outside funding to help our industry obtain qualified growers.

FIRST would allow you to set up a scholarship under our "Scholarship 2000" program. A set amount of money – determined by you – is given each year. Half goes to the student and half to the fund. After 10 years, the fund becomes self-supporting. You set up the criteria as to how you want the funds administered. It is easy and it gets money to the students now.

Research funds are in short supply in floriculture. Over the years these two organizations have helped fund the research so badly needed in our industry.

A list of the funded research is available from: www.firstinfloriculture.org or by calling the FIRST office at 517-333-4617.

Here are some ways you can act and help our industry:

• Organize a fundraiser with your local association or at the corporate level. Example: BFG Supply in

Ohio has put out coupons for purchases, which when used give one percent of that sale to FIRST.

• Set up a scholarship in the memory of a family member. This can be planned giving and help with estate taxes.

• Make a financial contribution to FIRST, which is tax deductible.

• Give your time as a scholarship or research proposal reviewer.

• Help spread the word in your local newsletters, web links, etc.

• Participate in the OFA Short Course FIRST fundraisers: Reverse Raffle – \$10,000 grand prize; Dramm 5K Run; DS Cole Hockey Game; Gator Raffle (sponsored by *Greenhouse Grower* magazine); and the Ball Hoops Contest.

FIRST provides a great service to our industry and needs your help to grow!

OFA



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